



Tomorrow

In the early years of the twentieth century, Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin arrives at a remote Siberian court inside the Arctic Circle. Determined to “fulfill himself by carrying out his professional duties,” he is shocked to discover that there is no work. The court, together with the resident judges Rembrandt, Nijinski and Yessenin, has been cut off from the world by snow. The three older judges are trying to escape the horror of idleness by cultivating various hobbies: one paints, the other dances, the third writes poetry and “philosophizes about the meaning of life.” They expect the new judge to adapt to the circumstances in a similar way.

He does not. For Mishkin, “the most important day isn’t now, but tomorrow.” He cannot accept things “simply gliding past,” so he tries to force his leiusurely colleagues to *fake* the circumstances in which their lives could have meaning. They, having gone through similar traumas of adaptation, resist his relentless campaign for “order” with a high degree of invention and humor. They know that life can be fun even if “things are allowed to be,” and even if “our only direction is that of the wind.”

The play can be seen as a metaphor for the unbearable void of existence in which there are no absolutes one can count on with certainty, and in which the parameters for meaningful action still have to be set. Each of the four judges grapples with the problem in his own way: Rembrandt by transcending the agony of eternal winter through painting a monotonous vision of spring, Yessenin by rationalizing the situation with reflection and poetry, and Nijinski by neurotic “running away on the spot”, which is what his ill-coordinated “dancing” amounts to.

Mishkin, the new judge, reacts “politically”: he decides to attack the unbearable state of notdoing (justbeing) head on. His attempt to “transform the present into a better tomorrow” is the driving force of the play. Its resolution, the softening of the conflict between two opposing views of reality into practicalities of coexistence, is the play’s message.



What the critics said

“Flisar’s play *Tomorrow* is, quite simply, a brilliant comedy. By orchestrating the polyphony of four voices, which are simultaneously the labyrinth and the salvation of the world, he has succeeded in creating a strikingly funny drama about our modern fate...”

Milan Dekleva, *Dnevnik*, 1992

“In sparkling and witty dialogue the author paints a world without God in which two opposing views of how life should be lived clash with great vigor and not a little humor, on a fine edge between realism and phantasy, dream and reality, touching not only on the basic issues of European civilisation but also on the meaning of art and its acceptance...”

Slavko Pezdir, *Delo*, 1992

“It isn’t the message of this metaphorical play, of this relentless settling of accounts with the world, that gives rise to the refined, playful, oddball, ironic dialogue; it is the characters and their relationships, their patterns of speech and the surprising twists of the plot that create the metaphor; they are so convincing and genuine that we are quite simply disarmed...”

Lojze Smasek, *Vecer*, 1992

“First broadcast on BBC Radio 3, *Tomorrow* is given its British stage premiere by Mania Productions at Barons Court, and a striking piece of metaphorical



theater it turns out to be... Leading Slovenian playwright Evald Flisar creates an hilarious stage world inhabited by a collection of oddball characters... allowed to teeter on a fine edge between order that is underpinned by violence and the potential madness of liberation..."

Roger Foss, *What's On*, London, 1993

"The German production of Evald Flisar's *Tomorrow* brilliantly and poetically reveals the arctic depths of human relationships in our famously vulgar and fast-living society... A theatrical wonder!"

Gisela Bartens, *Kleine Zeitung*, 1999

"A masterpiece of detective subtlety closely followed by the director Reinhold Ulrych ... Long applause..."

Eveline Kolberg, *Neue Zeit*, 1999

"A fiery staging of this splendidly profound play by Evald Flisar, which follows the tradition of Slovene literature as well as that of the English comedy of manners, which is the main attraction of this work..."

Bernd Schmid, *Kronen Zeitung*, 1999

"I decided to direct the stage version of *Tomorrow* in London because it bowled me over at the first reading. I liked the humor, I liked the plot, I liked the characters. What I also liked is the fact that the play does not offer simple solutions but poses questions and encourages the audience to find their own answers. In many ways *Tomorrow* is a play that every director dreams of – in spite of the clearly defined plot it offers plenty of scope for exploring a range of meanings..."

Sladjana Vujovic, director of the British production, *Sodobnost*, 2002



Tomorrow, Slovenian Chamber Theater, 1992
Sreco Spik as Rembrandt, Boris Kerc as Nijinski, Iztok Jereb as Yessenin,
Bojan Emersic as Mishkin
Directed by the author



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Nomination for Best Play of the Year Award 1993

Preseren Fund Award 1993

Characters

Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin
Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt
Ivan Alekseevich Nijinski
Ivan Petrovich Yessenin





Tomorrow was first broadcast on BBC Radio 3 on August 31, 1980.
It was directed by Brian Miller with the following cast:

Mishkin
Rembrandt
Nijinski
Yessenin

Jonathan Newth
John Barron
Trevor Martin
Andrew Hilton

The stage version of *Tomorrow* was first performed on November 23, 1992, at the Slovenian Chamber Theater in Ljubljana, Slovenia. It was directed by the author with the following cast:

Mishkin
Rembrandt
Nijinski
Yessenin

Bojan Emersic
Sreco Spik
Boris Kerc
Iztok Jereb



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Act One

1.

(Lights. Day room of a remote Siberian courthouse inside the Arctic Circle in the early years of the 20th century. Door. Window. Table. Bench. Chairs. On the wall, an icon or a portrait of Tsar Nicolas. Easel. On it, an inept watercolor painting of the timber courthouse surrounded by flowering meadows.)

(Rembrandt enters, wearing a thick black fur coat.)

REMBRANDT *(rubbing his hands)*: Good morning, room... Good morning, fire... Which would be a sparkling fire if we had firewood... And a fireplace... *(He stops in front of the easel and admires the painting.)* Good morning, birds...

NIJINSKI *(looks in at the door)*: Good morning, flowers...

REMBRANDT: Good morning, flowers...

NIJINSKI *(enters)*: Good morning, sun... *(He jogs into the middle of the room. He, too, is wearing a winter coat.)*

REMBRANDT: Good morning sun... Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt wishes you a lovely spring morning. *(He bends down to pick up a long thin brush and a box of water colors.)*

NIJINSKI *(bends down, imitating Rembrandt)*: Good morning, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: Good morning, Ivan Alekseevich. You look quite miserable.

NIJINSKI: I didn't sleep well.

REMBRANDT *(straightens up)*: I didn't sleep at all. I had a horrible nightmare.



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NIJINSKI (*straightens up*): What about me? I dreamt about a black spot in the white snowy distance, coming closer, growing bigger, and bigger –

(Yessenin enters, lost in thought, wearing a thick winter coat. He stops in the middle of the room, unseen by Nijinski and Rembrandt.)

REMBRANDT: And bigger, and followed by terrible wind!

NIJINSKI: How do you know?

REMBRANDT: Coming out of the white snowy distance was a black thing, first a speck, then a blot, then a cloud, and it was followed by great commotion and shaking and thunder!

NIJINSKI: And when the hurricane reached me it lifted me off the ground and threw me up in the air like a... like a...

REMBRANDT: An old newspaper.

NIJINSKI: Like a speck of dirt – and it tossed me about like a... like a...

REMBRANDT: An autumn leaf.

NIJINSKI: Like a... like a... All right, an autumn leaf.

REMBRANDT: And when it stopped tossing me about like a speck of dirt, I didn't fall to the ground, I remained suspended in black empty space –

NIJINSKI: And in this empty black space... (*Darkly.*) You stole my dream, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: You stole mine, Ivan Alekseevich.

(Pause. With a deep sense of foreboding, they slowly turn.)

REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*startled*): Aaaaah...!

YESSENIN: Good morning, Ivan Alekseevich. Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT (*on regaining composure*): Good morning, Ivan Petrovich. You look very pale.

NIJINSKI: Don't tell us. You had a bad dream.

YESSENIN: No. I've just been outside. A black speck is coming towards us out of the snowy distance.

(Rembrandt and Nijinski exchange glances.)

REMBRANDT: Optic illusion.

NIJINSKI: Quite common in the whiteness of snow.



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REMBRANDT: Fox.

NIJINSKI: Or a hare.

YESSENIN: It's walking upright.

NIJINSKI: Siberian bear.

REMBRANDT: Nikita will deal with it, you know how happy he is if he can shoot a bear.

NIJINSKI: Siberian bears are in the habit of walking upright.

YESSENIN: But not, as far as I know, of carrying suitcases.

(Rembrandt and Nijinski exchange glances.)

REMBRANDT: How far away was this speck when you saw it, Ivan Petrovich?

YESSENIN: Barely visible.

REMBRANDT: Yet you saw that it carried a suitcase.

YESSENIN: That I saw when it came closer.

REMBRANDT: Ivan Petrovich, considering the distance and the time you last saw this approaching speck with a suitcase, where would you say it is right now?

(Loud knocking. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski freeze, then slowly turn towards the door. Knocking is repeated.)

YESSENIN: Will you, Nikolai Nikolaevich?

REMBRANDT *(to Nijinski)*: Ivan Alekseevich?

NIJINSKI: Wouldn't rather you, Ivan Petrovich?

YESSENIN: No.

(Nijinski straightens up, takes a deep breath and goes to the door. He turns. Knocking is repeated. Nijinski hesitates. Yessenin and Rembrandt gesture him on. Nijinski goes out. Yessenin and Rembrandt wait, biting nails, pacing up and down. Nijinski returns.)

YESSENIN: Well?

REMBRANDT: Well?

NIJINSKI: There's someone outside.

YESSENIN: And?

REMBRANDT: And?

NIJINSKI: He claims to be a judge.



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YESSENIN: So?

REMBRANDT: So?

NIJINSKI: He says he's come to administer justice.

(An explosion of laughter. Nijinski tiptoes across the room and joins Yessenin and Rembrandt. They stand facing the door.)

YESSENIN *(yells)*: Let him come in!

(Mishkin enters, carrying a huge battered suitcase and wearing a white fur coat. He is exhausted, disappointed, wary.)

MISHKIN: Good morning.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Good morning.

MISHKIN: Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin. I've come from St. Petersburg.
I've just been appointed.

YESSENIN: Impossible.

REMBRANDT: Mistake.

NIJINSKI: Wrong address.

MISHKIN *(searching his pockets)*: I have papers...

YESSENIN: It's all right, it'll be as you say.

MISHKIN: I'd like to report to the Supreme Judge.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Why?

MISHKIN: I'd like to go straight to work.

YESSENIN: Before you've met your new colleagues?

MISHKIN: Where can I meet them?

REMBRANDT *(holds out his hand, but remains where he is)*: Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt.

MISHKIN *(holds out his hand, but remains where he is)*: Rembrandt...
An unusual name for a Russian judge.

REMBRANDT: I refuse to discuss my mother's private life!

NIJINSKI *(approaches Mishkin, holds out his hand and bows)*: Ivan Alekseevich Nijinski.

(They shake hands.)

MISHKIN: Nijinski... Where did I hear that before?

(Nijinski demonstrates a couple of dance steps.)



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YESSENIN: And I'm Ivan Petrovich Yessenin. *(He holds out his hand, but remains where he is.)*

MISHKIN: Glad to've met you. And now I really should report to the Supreme Judge. Where can I find him?

(Rembrandt, Yessenin and Nijinski exchange glances.)

REMBRANDT: He's not feeling well.

NIJINSKI: He's away on business.

YESSENIN: Not an easy man to talk to.

NIJINSKI: We avoid him.

REMBRANDT: We have no regular contacts.

MISHKIN *(astonished)*: What about the system of work, allocation of cases, coordination? Isn't the Supreme Judge responsible for all that? I want to see him. Now.

YESSENIN: Aren't you tired?

REMBRANDT: With all those snowdrifts behind you?

NIJINSKI: You must be exhausted.

MISHKIN: It's true that I'm a little –

YESSENIN: Well then, quickly to bed, and hot tea, so you don't catch pneumonia – *(Starts to remove Mishkin's coat.)*

NIJINSKI *(feeling Mishkin's hand)*: Pure, solid ice!

MISHKIN *(half-hearted resistance)*: I still think it would be appropriate to –

YESSENIN: You need a rest.

REMBRANDT: And plenty of it.

(They turn Mishkin round and push him towards the door.)

NIJINSKI: Good night, Aleksei Ivanovich.

(They shove him out. They throw his coat after him, then his suitcase. They close the door and exchange glances.)

NIJINSKI: "What about the system of work, allocation of cases, coordination?"

(An outburst of laughter. Yessenin raises his hand, laughter stops.)

(Blackout.)



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2.

(Lights. Yessenin, Rembrandt, Nijinski and Mishkin are sitting at the table, drinking tea, refilling their mugs from a samovar.)

NIJINSKI: How do you feel, Aleksei Ivanovich?

REMBRANDT: Have you had enough?

YESSENIN: In St. Petersburg, of course, breakfast is a more sophisticated affair.

MISHKIN: I've certainly never eaten bear steaks before. Don't you eat anything else?

REMBRANDT: Our choice is limitless.

YESSENIN: By that we mean that, in addition to bear steaks, we have potatoes.

NIJINSKI: And quite a lot of them.

REMBRANDT: Less and less as time goes by.

NIJINSKI: And, as time goes by, more and more rotten.

YESSENIN: So far we've managed to avoid the rotten ones.

NIJINSKI: As far as I know we also have a few sacks of flour.

REMBRANDT: Enriched with mouse droppings.

NIJINSKI: We had a mice plague.

YESSENIN: We also have enough tea, thank God. Shall I pour you some more, Aleksei Ivanovich? *(Refills Mishkin's mug from the samovar.)*
Good Russian tea.

REMBRANDT: On a good day Nikita may shoot an arctic hare.

NIJINSKI: Not very often, though.

MISHKIN: It can't be easy to shoot a bear.

YESSENIN: The one we've just eaten was shot a few yards from this table.

REMBRANDT: God knows how he managed to get into the building –

NIJINSKI: But suddenly there he was, standing upright in the corridor –

REMBRANDT: Snow and ice stuck to his fur –

NIJINSKI: He wanted to come in, seemed fascinated by the smells from the kitchen –

REMBRANDT: Nikita was frying potato pancakes –

YESSENIN: Friendly sort of bear, he was. Seems rather a pity we had to shoot him.

NIJINSKI: But the meat was good, wasn't it?

REMBRANDT: We mustn't forget the fur.

NIJINSKI: The fur that kept you warm last night.

MISHKIN: Even so it took me an hour before I could wiggle my toes.



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YESSENIN (*rising*): Ivan Alekseevich, didn't we agree that you'd look after Aleksei Ivanovich?

NIJINSKI (*rising*): I gave him five blankets, three bearskins and my own coat!

(*Yessenin, Nijinski and Rembrandt look at Mishkin.*)

MISHKIN: I'm not used to sleeping at forty degrees below zero.

(*Nijinski and Yessenin sit.*)

YESSENIN: I sleep very comfortably with one blanket and one bearskin. Would you like to borrow my bearskin?

REMBRANDT: You can have mine as well.

MISHKIN: Thank you, no... I don't want to be an exception.

YESSENIN: Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich. (*He claps.*)

NIJINSKI, REMBRANDT (*clapping*): Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich, bravo.

MISHKIN: What I really need to get warm is work. When are we likely to get some?

(*Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski abruptly rise.*)

REMBRANDT: Must go back to painting. A half-finished tree is not a pretty sight.

YESSENIN: A thousand things to attend to. Glad you're settling in, Aleksei Ivanovich. (*Goes out.*)

NIJINSKI: Enough of lazing about. (*Starts practising dance steps.*)

MISHKIN (*astonished*): Is it something I said?

NIJINSKI: Why? It's normal for us to go to work after breakfast.

REMBRANDT (*to himself*): There's no doubt about it... A half-finished tree is not a pretty sight...

MISHKIN: What about me? When will I get some work?

NIJINSKI: It's winter.

MISHKIN: Are there no robberies in the Arctic Circle, no murders, no disputes?

REMBRANDT: We haven't been told of any.

MISHKIN: But this is the regional court.

NIJINSKI: The snow's cut us off. It's a miracle you managed to get here.

REMBRANDT: If you thought you could send some poor Siberian thief to the gallows on your first day you were a little too hopeful.



Tomorrow, Barons Court Theater, London, United Kingdom, 1994
Gary Drabwell as Mishkin, Michael Bridgeland as Nijinski,
Tomas Lukes as Rembrandt
Directed by Sladjana Vujovic



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NIJINSKI: For that sort of pleasure you'll have to wait.

MISHKIN: Not too long, I hope.

NIJINSKI: If you have nothing to do you can watch me practising.

(Demonstrates a few dance steps.)

MISHKIN: Actually I'd like to finish my letter.

(He produces a piece of paper and pen and goes to the table. Rembrandt and Nijinski exchange glances.)

NIJINSKI: Letter?

MISHKIN: Letter.

REMBRANDT: To one of us?

MISHKIN: No, to my mother, who lives in St. Petersburg.

(Rembrandt and Nijinski look at each other and burst out laughing.)

MISHKIN: I don't remember saying anything funny.

NIJINSKI: You said you wanted to finish a letter to your mother.

MISHKIN: Is that forbidden?

NIJINSKI: No. Everything is allowed.

REMBRANDT: The only problem is that it may take a while before you can send it off.

(Rembrandt and Nijinski laugh.)

(Blackout.)

(Spotlight on Mishkin, who sits at the table, writing.)

MISHKIN *(voice on tape)*: Dear mother... Lonely up here... The sun hovers above the horizon for a few hours a day... the rest is night... My fellow judges... well, perhaps I shouldn't jump to conclusions... I still haven't seen the Supreme Judge... Old Nikita, the servant, is mute... Last night I found him in the corridor... standing there with his hunting gun... staring at the wall... Snow everywhere, nothing to do here... The tips of my fingers are blue... My heart, once so warm, bristles with icicles...

(Blackout.)



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3.

(Lights. Yessenin, Rembrandt, Nijinski, Mishkin.)

YESSENIN: Gentlemen!

NIJINSKI: And ladies!

YESSENIN: We're gathered here today to formally welcome into our midst Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin –

REMBRANDT: Who insists on becoming our colleague.

YESSENIN: We didn't expect him. Considering our situation, he's less than –

NIJINSKI: Urgently needed.

REMBRANDT: But he is here.

YESSENIN: We have no choice but to pretend that we're genuinely glad to see him, and welcome him as if from the bottom of our hearts.

REMBRANDT: Let him feel at home among us.

NIJINSKI: Home sweet home.

YESSENIN: For his enjoyment we've prepared a cultural program. An exhibition will be followed by a ballet performance, and by some of my latest poetry. In conclusion we will ask Aleksei Ivanovich to surprise us with his own contribution.

REMBRANDT: Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich. *(He claps.)*

YESSENIN: Let's begin with a ceremonial opening of the twenty-fifth exhibition of our resident genius, Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt –

NIJINSKI *(claps)*: Bravo, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: Twenty-seventh. *(Crosses to Yessenin.)* Ceremonial opening of the twenty-seventh independent exhibition of our resident genius.

YESSENIN: An unforgivable lapse. I'm sorry.

NIJINSKI: As if from the bottom of your heart.

(Yessenin crosses to Nijinski and slaps his face.)

NIJINSKI: All I did was repeat your words.

YESSENIN *(slaps his face once more)*: I'm sorry, Ivan Alekseevich. From the bottom of my heart.

NIJINSKI: Thank you, Ivan Petrovich. No one else can bring me back to reality as quickly as you can. Could I get one more, for a complete



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sobering-up? (*Yessenin slaps his face.*) Thank you, Ivan Petrovich, from the bottom of my – (*Yessenin slaps his face.*) – my heart, thank you. (*Crosses to Rembrandt.*) Nikolai Nikolaevich, may I count on your favor as well? (*Rembrandt slaps his face.*) Oh, what bliss, to have such understanding colleagues! (*Turns to Mishkin.*) Aleksei Ivanovich, please. (*He presents his cheek.*)

MISHKIN (*surprised, shocked*): Maybe some other time.

NIJINSKI: How can you remain so indifferent? (*Returns to Rembrandt.*) Nikolai Nikolaevich?

(*Rembrandt shakes his head and thrusts his hands deep into the pockets of his coat. Nijinski goes to Yessenin.*)

NIJINSKI: Ivan Petrovich, please.

(*Yessenin, too, shakes his head and thrusts his hands into his pockets.*)

NIJINSKI: How can you deny me my medicine? (*On his knees.*) Please knock out my teeth. Step on me. Bang my head against the wall. (*He starts to bang his head rhythmically against the table.*)

REMBRANDT, YESSENIN: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten...

(*Nijinski grows quiet. Leaning against the table, he slowly turns with a smile of relief on his face.*)

YESSENIN: And now, the ceremonial opening of the twenty-seventh independent exhibition of our resident genius Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt.

REMBRANDT: Gentlemen. Since my last exhibition, as you may have noticed, an important stylistic innovation has taken place in my work. It has to do with my well-known attempt to come as close as possible to the elusive spirit of my central theme. Here, as you can see, I tried to dull the green to achieve a balance with the brown walls of the building. This green here, for example, looks almost real, does it not, it jumps at you as you look at it, does it not? Unfortunately, as you can see, I've ruined the impact by filling the



Tomorrow, Preseren Theater Kranj, Slovenia, 1996
Pavel Rakovec as Yessenin, Matjaz Visnar as Nijinski,
Polde Bibic as Rembrandt
Directed by Matija Logar





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air with too many birds. In conclusion I'd say, "Better a sparrow in the hand than two pigeons on the roof, what?" – ha ha ha...

YESSENIN (*clapping*): Bravo, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

NIJINSKI: I didn't know these were sparrows, I thought they were bats.

REMBRANDT: I didn't say sparrows, I said birds!

YESSENIN: Sparrows are birds, too, bravo, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

(*Yessenin and Nijinski clap.*)

NIJINSKI: Won't you join us, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN: Yes... Yes... (*He claps half-heartedly.*) Why...?

YESSENIN: We're listening.

MISHKIN: I hope you don't mind my asking, but why are his paintings all the same? He's got a stack of them in his room, all showing the court building surrounded by flowering meadows.

(*Pause. Unease.*)

NIJINSKI: Lack of imagination, most likely.

(*Rembrandt, deeply offended, marches to the farthest corner and pretends to stare at the ceiling. Yessenin slaps Nijinski's face.*)

YESSENIN: On the contrary. Our colleague Rembrandt is dominated by, if I may say so, a uniqueness of vision. History of painting is full of such cases. Van Gogh and sunflowers. Raphael and angels...

MISHKIN: I asked because I was curious, not to criticize.

YESSENIN (*coughs to attract Rembrandt's attention*): To conclude: our great artist, our house genius, has – as demonstrated by today's very successful exhibition – so sharpened the elements of his central preoccupation –

REMBRANDT (*without turning*): I don't give a damn.

(*Yessenin, with a gesture of helplessness, beckons to Nijinski.*)

NIJINSKI (*approaches the painting*): I don't believe it. (*Rembrandt looks over his shoulder.*) Why didn't I notice that before? (*Rembrandt returns to the easel.*) Congratulations, Nikolai Nikolaevich. This



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hue of brown here, in the left lower corner of the main door – this heralds an exceptionally important stylistic reorientation –

REMBRANDT: Which hue of brown?

NIJINSKI: This. (*Points with his finger.*)

REMBRANDT: That's green!

NIJINSKI (*checks again*): This is a hue of green which leans towards brown. Which, however, succeeds in remaining almost entirely green. In a nutshell, this is a greenish hue of brown which is so greenish that it's almost entirely green. (*Retreating to escape Rembrandt's ire.*) Congratulations, Nikolai Nikolaevich. Not only have you succeeded in creating a new, hitherto non-existent color, which in itself is an historic event, you have also – you have also – help me, Ivan Petrovich –

YESSENIN: You have succeeded, Nikolai Nikolaevich, in enriching our awareness with new insights into our predicament and confirming the old, but insufficiently appreciated truth that no snowflake ever falls in the wrong place. A great achievement for which you deserve applause. (*Claps.*)

NIJINSKI (*claps*): Bravo, Nikolai Nikolaevich. (*Turns to Mishkin.*) Won't you join us, Aleksei Ivanovich?

(*Mishkin claps twice.*)

YESSENIN: And now to our next great event: Ivan Alekseevich Nijinski will perform his new ballet. Bravo, Ivan Alekseevich. (*Claps. Looks at Rembrandt.*)

REMBRANDT (*claps obediently*): Bravo, Ivan Alekseevich. Won't you join us, Aleksei Ivanovich?

(*Mishkin claps twice.*)

YESSENIN (*a touch impatiently*): Ivan Alekseevich. Please.

NIJINSKI: Just a moment... You know how it is... I haven't performed for Aleksei Ivanovich before... (*He closes his eyes.*) One, two, three...

(*He raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Music: Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 3. Nijinski "dances." He lurches towards Yessenin, who steps out of the way; he lurches towards Rembrandt, who jumps out of the way; he lurches towards Mishkin who avoids being*



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knocked over in the nick of time. Nijinski dances like a complete amateur with no sense of rhythm or movement. He stumbles and ends up on the floor in a knot of limbs. Yessenin and Rembrandt rush to help him to his feet.)

NIJINSKI: Complete disaster... I won't survive this...

(Yessenin and Rembrandt help him to the nearest chair.)

YESSENIN: Gentlemen... We must be thankful for a rare privilege. We've been able to witness an exceptionally brave attempt by an artist to transcend his physical limitations. Not his personal ones, but limitations imposed upon Man by Nature. For this attempt, which couldn't end other than with a fiasco, Ivan Alekseevich deserves not only our deepest sympathy but full admiration. *(He claps.)*

REMBRANDT *(clapping)*: Bravo, bravo. *(Looks at Mishkin.)* Won't you join us, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: I think not.

NIJINSKI: Oh misery... Oh shame...

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich. Here's an opportunity for you to show how generous you can be. You'll gain a few friends. Not only that – you'll show us that you know where you are and what is expected of you. And also that our fears are unfounded.

MISHKIN: They are unfounded. I know where I am. I know what's expected of me.

YESSENIN *(pleasantly surprised)*: Then we understand each other!

MISHKIN: I'm afraid not. We mustn't forget my fears, which are far from being unfounded.

NIJINSKI: Ivan Petrovich, I suggest a repeat performance. I've created the wrong impression. Aleksei Ivanovich thinks I can't dance.

MISHKIN: You need music for dancing.

NIJINSKI *(looks at Yessenin, Rembrandt, Mishkin)*: Music?

MISHKIN: Of course. Music.

(Nijinski raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Music: brief passage from Brahms' Hungarian Dance no. 3, which ends as Nijinski snaps the fingers of his other hand.)

NIJINSKI: Music.



Tomorrow, Slovenian Chamber Theater, 1992
Sreco Spik as Rembrandt, Iztok Jereb as Yessenin,
Bojan Emersic as Mishkin, Boris Kerc as Nijinski
Directed by the author



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MISHKIN: You can't dance without music.

(Nijinski raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Same music, same end.)

YESSENIN: You don't hear music, Aleksei Ivanovich?

(He raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Music: brief passage from Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 5, which ends as Yessenin snaps the fingers of his other hand.)

MISHKIN: I must be hard of hearing.

REMBRANDT: What about this?

(He raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Music: brief passage from Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 1, which ends as Rembrandt snaps the fingers of his other hand.)

MISHKIN: I must be completely deaf.

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski exchange glances. Nijinski raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Music: Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 6. Nijinski, Rembrandt and Yessenin, with arms linked across their shoulders, perform a folk dance. They pull Mishkin towards them and force him to dance with them. At first he resists, then allows them to lead him, but remains very awkward. Finally he uses force to break away. Music ends.)

MISHKIN: I protest against this cruel attack on my dignity! I demand an apology!

(An outburst of laughter.)

YESSENIN: Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich.

NIJINSKI: "I demand an apology. I protest against this cruel attack on my dignity." Congratulations, Aleksei Ivanovich.

YESSENIN: It's good to know that you're not entirely without a feeling for the significance of the moment.

REMBRANDT: What a relief.



Tomorrow, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 1999
Burkhard Minisdorfer as Rembrandt, Norbert Hainschek as Yessenin,
Stefan Ortis as Mishkin, Alfred Haidacher as Nijinski
Directed by Rheinhold Ulryich



TOMORROW

YESSENIN: And also a good opportunity to carry on with our program.

REMBRANDT: Gentlemen. Quiet, please. We're about to witness an unforgettable and unrepeatable aesthetic event.

YESSENIN (*moves to the middle of the room*): As you know I've been pondering for a very long time on the nature of things and on ways of dismantling illusions. I've written a poem which I hope will be of solace to all of us in bad moments. It's called "Arctic Elegy."

REMBRANDT: Oh wonderful, Ivan Petrovich, splendid!

NIJINSKI: Ssshhhh! Silence!

YESSENIN (*produces a sheet of paper, clears his throat*):

Comfort is what we have,
not what we want.
Drifting like snowflakes,
never touching the ground,
we're ephemerons –
our only direction is that
of the wind.
Wind breathes life into
moments. Wind is comfort.
And comfort is what we have.

(*Brief pause, then applause.*)

REMBRANDT: I never thought I'd live to see the day when a few lines of verse would move me so deeply. Impressive – don't you think so, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN: Unfortunately that's not my area.

NIJINSKI: I feel reborn... cleansed... newly put together!

YESSENIN: And – as is our custom – I've prepared a copy for each of us so that "Arctic Elegy" can become part of our collective unconscious.

(*Yessenin hands each a sheet of paper. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski step next to Mishkin and turn him around so that they all face the audience. Together they recite "Arctic Elegy," except Mishkin, who stubbornly stares at the ceiling. When they finish, he steps out of line, faces them, dryly claps three times and walks towards the table.*)



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YESSENIN: Thank you, Aleksei Ivanovich.

NIJINSKI: "We're ephemerals –"

REMBRANDT: "Our only direction is that of the wind –"

YESSENIN: Gentlemen, a round of applause for Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin.

(Applause. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski sit on the floor and face Mishkin, who is leaning against the table.)

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich, please.

MISHKIN: Well, I –

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Bravo! *(They clap.)*

MISHKIN: I've nothing to say, really.

YESSENIN: It's a cultural evening.

MISHKIN: Unfortunately I neither paint nor write poetry nor dance to imaginary music.

(Pause. A few coughs.)

YESSENIN: Have you no hobbies?

MISHKIN: I read. Mostly legal stuff.

YESSENIN: But how do you fulfill yourself?

MISHKIN: I'm a judge.

(Pause. A few coughs.)

YESSENIN: Winter months can be very long.

MISHKIN: That's why it's so important to keep in good shape!

YESSENIN: We know that.

MISHKIN: Why don't you do crossword puzzles? That would at least promote mental discipline. *(Behind the table, lecturing.)* In Petersburg, yes, there you can allow yourself a moment of frivolity – let go occasionally. Work will put you back on your feet before you sink too far. But here, with nothing to do for weeks on end, one must be on guard twenty-four hours a day.

YESSENIN *(after pause)*: Guarding what?

MISHKIN: The judge in oneself.

(An outburst of laughter. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski rise and walk to the door.)



TOMORROW

MISHKIN: Where're you going?

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski stop laughing and turn around.)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: To bed! *(They go out.)*

(Blackout.)

(Spotlight on Mishkin, who is sitting at the table and writing a letter to his mother.)

MISHKIN *(tape)*: Dear mother... I was right about my fellow judges... They've allowed their inner discipline to erode... They're like children, irrational, at times silly... only half aware of their predicament... They need help...

(Blackout.)

4.

(Lights. Mishkin sits at the table. Nijinski enters and looks at him. He raises his hand and snaps his fingers.)

NIJINSKI: Shall we dance, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN *(rises)*: Ivan Alekseevich. I'm willing to help you.

NIJINSKI: Good. Put your left foot in front of the right one.

MISHKIN: You're no longer alone, Ivan Alekseevich.

NIJINSKI *(looks around)*: Who else is there?

MISHKIN: From now on there're two of us.

NIJINSKI: Ah. You and I.

MISHKIN: You don't have to suppress your doubts any more.

NIJINSKI: I knew you were generous, but this goes well beyond my expectations.

MISHKIN: You don't have to pretend any more that you enjoy being abused.

NIJINSKI: Abused?

MISHKIN: Slapped. Humiliated. When will you draw a line?

NIJINSKI: Too much snow.



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MISHKIN: When will you say: this far and no further?

NIJINSKI: I'm frightened. That's why I laugh – *(He laughs.)* I'm afraid of ice. That's why I dance –

(He raises his hand, but Mishkin pulls it back down.)

MISHKIN: They keep making a fool of you. And what do you do?

NIJINSKI: And what do I do?

MISHKIN: Not a thing.

NIJINSKI: Not a thing.

MISHKIN: Do you ever complain?

NIJINSKI: To whom?

MISHKIN: The Supreme Judge.

NIJINSKI: Ah...

MISHKIN: Why not?

NIJINSKI: He's away on business.

MISHKIN: Always?

NIJINSKI: You'll get a more interesting answer to this question from Ivan Petrovich. This, thank God, isn't my area. I'm a dancer.

(He raises his hand to snap his fingers, but Mishkin abruptly pulls it back down.)

MISHKIN: When is he coming back?

NIJINSKI: When it stops snowing.

MISHKIN: But we're inside the Arctic Circle.

NIJINSKI: Of course we are.

MISHKIN: Winters here can be incredibly long.

NIJINSKI: Even longer than that.

MISHKIN: Here it can snow every day all the year round.

NIJINSKI: All the more reason to dance, wouldn't you say?

(He raises his hand to snap his fingers, but Mishkin abruptly pulls it back down.)

MISHKIN: Order is needed regardless.

NIJINSKI: There is order here.

MISHKIN: Says who?

NIJINSKI: Ivan Petrovich.



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MISHKIN: And you believe him?

NIJINSKI: He's the one who's concerned with thinking. And concepts.

And explanations –

MISHKIN: That's why you believe him?

NIJINSKI: Of course.

MISHKIN: I think not.

NIJINSKI: Why not?

MISHKIN: I think you believe him for two entirely different reasons.

NIJINSKI: And what would they be?

MISHKIN: First, because you're too lazy to form your own opinions –

NIJINSKI: And second?

MISHKIN: Because of this. (*He slaps his face.*)

NIJINSKI: That's not true. (*Mishkin slaps his face again*)

MISHKIN: Isn't it? (*He slaps his face once more.*)

NIJINSKI: It's true that I'm not a model of stability. That I'm a little...
ambivalent... and... and...

MISHKIN: Too cowardly to object.

NIJINSKI: Not at all. I object at every possible opportunity. I object so
much that I'm genuinely objectionable. In fact, I'm the only one at
this court who objects.

MISHKIN (*slaps his face*): And the only one who's regularly slapped.

NIJINSKI: Thank God. Otherwise I'd spread out over the floor.

MISHKIN: Why? You're not made of putty.

NIJINSKI: No, but I feel like it.

MISHKIN: And beatings form you into something more solid, a loaf, or a
roll, or maybe a doughnut? (*He slaps his face.*)

NIJINSKI: They remind me that life is no holiday but a daily chore.

MISHKIN: What's wrong with the shovel, then?

NIJINSKI: What shovel?

MISHKIN: The one we could use to shovel snow from the courtyard, to
make room for early morning exercises. And from round the building,
so we could go for a quick run every morning, to get some fresh air.

NIJINSKI: Fresh air is cold.

MISHKIN: So much the better.

NIJINSKI: Fresh air keeps blowing in through the gaps in the windows.

MISHKIN: Shall we go?

NIJINSKI: Fresh air – (*Mishkin slaps his face.*) Fresh air.

MISHKIN: Shovel.

NIJINSKI: Shovel.



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MISHKIN (*marching on the spot*): Left right, left right...

NIJINSKI: Left right, left right...

(They march out.)

(Blackout.)

5.

(Lights on Yessenin and Rembrandt, listening to the sounds of shoveling outside.)

YESSENIN: Who gave him the shovel?

REMBRANDT: He found it.

YESSENIN: I didn't know we had one.

REMBRANDT: Five.

YESSENIN: Five shovels? What for?

REMBRANDT: For shoveling snow.

YESSENIN: We don't shovel snow.

REMBRANDT: The others before us did. It wasn't always like this.

Different times.

YESSENIN: I don't remember them. Why can't you forget them?

REMBRANDT: History is history.

YESSENIN: What's that coming out of your mouth, Nikolai Nikolaievich?

REMBRANDT: It's good to know.

YESSENIN: These are not your words.

REMBRANDT: Of course not. I heard them from you.

YESSENIN: Why didn't we hide those shovels?

REMBRANDT: Because of our profound grief. *(Yessenin stares at him.)*

Don't you remember when they were last used?

YESSENIN: No.

REMBRANDT: For me, the hardest thing to forget is a funeral.

YESSENIN: We don't mention funerals under this roof!

REMBRANDT: I'm not talking about funerals. I'm talking about the shovels we last used when we buried the unfortunate –

(Yessenin places a hand over Rembrandt's mouth.)



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YESSENIN: About the shovels we should've hidden, so they wouldn't fall into the hands of those who want to turn back the wheel of history.

REMBRANDT: Well, we didn't hide them, and the wheel of history is turning back.

YESSENIN: Nonsense. Mishkin has found his *modus vivendi*. We're going to be a happy little group of contented judges. You will paint, Nijinski will dance, I shall philosophize about the meaning of life. Mishkin will shovel snow.

REMBRANDT: If Mishkin alone were shovelling snow it wouldn't be so bad.

YESSENIN (*hurries to the window and looks out*): Oh my God... Why didn't you tell me? If we lose Nijinski we have an extremely unhealthy balance: two against two! Something must be done immediately.

REMBRANDT: I agree.

YESSENIN: Well, why don't you do something?

REMBRANDT: I leave the matter to your superior wisdom.

YESSENIN: We'll wait. Nijinski will get tired, and Mishkin will come to his senses. We ought to help him. Why don't you teach him how to... how to... paint.

REMBRANDT: I have only one brush.

YESSENIN: Surely that's enough for two friends.

REMBRANDT (*surprised*): The most I can say for Mishkin is that I feel sorry for him.

YESSENIN: Sorry?

REMBRANDT: The way I feel sorry for Nijinski. And you, Ivan Petrovich. And for myself.

YESSENIN: Why do elephants have large ears?

REMBRANDT (*exploding*): So they can fan themselves when it gets hot! So they can wrap their heads in them when it gets cold! So they can flap through the air trumpeting with their trunks!

YESSENIN: I think you've lost some of your balance, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

REMBRANDT: Do you really think so?

YESSENIN: What have you just done?

REMBRANDT: Lost my balance a little. I apologize.

YESSENIN: Would a taste of Nijinski's medicine help?

REMBRANDT: I doubt it.

YESSENIN (*slaps his face*): How do you feel?

REMBRANDT (*nursing his cheek*): Very well. Very well indeed.



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YESSENIN: Are you sure?

REMBRANDT: One hundred and ten percent.

YESSENIN: Shall we try a double dose, just in case?

REMBRANDT (*retreating*): That could have negative consequences.
(*Yessenin follows him.*) That could have unpredictable, catastrophic
consequences! I could, for example, grab a shovel and start shovel-
ing snow!

(*Nijinski, bent and holding his lower back, staggers in through the
door. Gasping for breath, he collapses on the floor.*)

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich!

REMBRANDT: Won't you join us in a little dance?

YESSENIN: Of course you will.

(*He snaps his fingers. Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 3. Yessenin
and Rembrandt grab Nijinski and lift him up, trying to make him
dance. Nijinski, too tired to stand up, let alone dance, sinks to his
knees. Yessenin and Rembrandt, still trying to dance, keep pulling
and pushing him. Mishkin enters. End of music, end of dance.
Nijinski lies on the floor.*)

MISHKIN: Why is he refusing to make me a bath?

YESSENIN: Who?

MISHKIN: Nikita. I put the tub out myself, I asked him to fill it with
snow and put it on the fire. He just stood there, laughing at me.
Why is he always laughing at me?

REMBRANDT: That's the only sound he can make.

MISHKIN: I want a bath. I'd melt the snow myself but he stands in the
kitchen with his gun and won't let me in.

REMBRANDT: I'll talk to him. (*Goes out.*)

MISHKIN: Such insolence. I don't deserve to be treated like that. Not by
a servant.

YESSENIN: Nikita is hardly a servant.

MISHKIN: He cooks, sweeps the floor, washes our clothes, he chops
firewood, goes hunting, what is he if not a servant?

YESSENIN: Caretaker, would be one way of putting it.

MISHKIN: He should know his place and behave accordingly.



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REMBRANDT (*returns*): It's all right, he'll do it. He was upset because of your shoveling.

MISHKIN: Why?

YESSENIN: Come to the window, Aleksei Ivanovich. (*Reluctantly, Mishkin joins Yessenin at the window.*) It took you two hours to clear away a small patch of snow. It took the wind less than one hour to blow it all back.

MISHKIN (*slowly turns*): This can't be true... This is a nightmare... (*He starts to bang his head against the table.*)

YESSENIN (*restraining him*): Please, Aleksei Ivanovich... Rest.

(*Leads Mishkin out.*)

REMBRANDT (*approaches the easel, picks up his brush*): Good afternoon, birds. Good afternoon, flowers.

NIJINSKI (*propping himself up on an elbow*): Good afternoon, sun.

REMBRANDT: Good afternoon, sun... (*Crosses to Nijinski and slaps his face.*) Good afternoon, renegade. (*Slaps him again.*) Good afternoon, traitor. (*Slaps him once more.*) And this is the one that I got, although it was meant for you.

NIJINSKI: Thank you, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: Don't mention it. (*Slaps him once more.*)

(*Blackout.*)

6.

(*Lights on judges sitting at the table.*)

REMBRANDT (*belching*): Thank God we've seen the last of that bear. Never knew potatoes could taste so heavenly. (*He rises and crosses to the easel. He reaches for the brush.*) Good morning, birdy-birdies...

MISHKIN (*abruptly rising*): When did this court last resemble a court? (*Pause. They look at him.*) When did you hold the last trial?

YESSENIN: Can you remember, Nikolai Nikolaievich?

(*Rembrandt belches and shrugs.*)



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NIJINSKI: What was the case again? Stolen bearskin?

YESSENIN: So long ago?

MISHKIN: How long? A month? A year? When did you come here?

YESSENIN: Quite some time ago.

MISHKIN: What does that mean – in concrete terms?

YESSENIN: There's nothing concrete about time, Mishkin, it all depends
on the way you experience it –

MISHKIN: Let's leave philosophy for happier times. When were you
appointed?

YESSENIN: I personally in times quite distant and past.

REMBRANDT: Sometimes they appoint you and then forget about you.
They drink too much vodka in Petersburg.

MISHKIN: Where is the nearest settlement?

YESSENIN: Abandoned. The mine closed.

MISHKIN: The next nearest settlement.

YESSENIN: You'll never reach it.

REMBRANDT: And if you do – what will you do there?

NIJINSKI: In the end you'll have to come back.

MISHKIN: I don't understand how you can live here without doing
anything!

REMBRANDT: I paint.

NIJINSKI: I dance.

YESSENIN: I write poetry.

MISHKIN: Rubbish! We're not painters, dancers, poets. We're judges.
Where is your sense of vocation?

REMBRANDT: Our life is full of excitement and fun.

MISHKIN: How can life with no purpose be fun? Look at yourselves.
You're not happy. You're the most miserable lot of men I've ever
met.

*(An explosion of laughter. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski laugh
with complete abandon. Yessenin signals with his hand, laughter
stops.)*

YESSENIN: Poor Mishkin.

REMBRANDT: Poor Aleksei Ivanovich.

NIJINSKI: Poor Aleksei.

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich, please.



TOMORROW

(Nijinski picks up a chair, dances across to Mishkin, puts the chair down behind Mishkin's back.)

YESSENIN: Sit down, Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin.

NIJINSKI: Sit, Aleksei Ivanovich.

REMBRANDT: Sit, Aleksei.

NIJINSKI: Come on. Sit down.

MISHKIN (*sits*): You have no right to do this to me. I was appointed by Petersburg, you can't overrule that.

YESSENIN: All we want is to ask you a few simple questions.

REMBRANDT: Are you afraid?

MISHKIN: Only the Supreme Judge has that right. When will I be allowed to see him?

YESSENIN: Sit down.

REMBRANDT: Sit down.

NIJINSKI: Sit down. (*He dusts the seat of the chair with his elbow.*)

(Mishkin decides to sit.)

YESSENIN: Stand up.

MISHKIN (*rising*): You just told me to sit down.

YESSENIN: I don't think so.

REMBRANDT: Neither do I.

NIJINSKI: I think you just asked Mishkin to stand up.

MISHKIN: You asked me, all three of you, to sit down.

YESSENIN: Why aren't you sitting, then?

MISHKIN (*slight pause*): Because you told me to stand up.

YESSENIN: All right then, sit down.

REMBRANDT: Sit sit.

NIJINSKI: Stand up.

(Mishkin sits.)

YESSENIN: Sit down.

REMBRANDT: Stand up.

NIJINSKI: Sit down.

(Mishkin rises.)



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YESSENIN: Standup sitdown.

REMBRANDT: Sitdown standup.

(Mishkin rises, sits, rises, sits...)

NIJINSKI: One two, one two, one two...

(Mishkin remains sitting.)

YESSENIN: Sit down.

(Mishkin rises.)

REMBRANDT: Stand up.

(Mishkin sits down.)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Sitdown!

(Mishkin rises.)

YESSENIN: All right, ask the chair to sit down. Well? Ask the chair to sit down.

REMBRANDT: Ask the chair to sit down.

MISHKIN: It has no ears.

YESSENIN: Do you have ears?

MISHKIN: Yes, although right now I'd be happier without them. Fortunately I don't have to keep them open. *(He plugs his ears with his forefingers.)*

YESSENIN: What sort of ears are they?

REMBRANDT: Large?

NIJINSKI: Or small?

(Rembrandt and Nijinski pull Mishkin's hands away from his ears and yell.)

REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Large or small?

MISHKIN: I protest in the strongest possible terms!

YESSENIN: *(disappointed)*: Mishkin, Mishkin...



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NIJINSKI: "I protest in the strongest possible terms!"

REMBRANDT: Can't you think of something new?

YESSENIN: It doesn't look too good, does it, gentlemen?

REMBRANDT: No sense of humor.

NIJINSKI: You'll freeze to death.

MISHKIN: I'm quite warm, thank you.

YESSENIN: Every fool can put on a coat. I'm talking about your mind.

There, my friend, the Arctic Circle moves steadily southwards.

Without a sense of humor to melt the ice –

NIJINSKI: You'll end up like Nikita.

REMBRANDT: Icebound.

YESSENIN: Mute.

MISHKIN: I can look after myself.

YESSENIN: I see. No sense of humor, but you have other ways. Perhaps
you're a good jumper. Can you jump higher than your chair?

REMBRANDT: To a different viewpoint?

NIJINSKI: Out of danger?

REMBRANDT: Out of yourself?

YESSENIN: Can you jump higher than your chair?

MISHKIN: Can you?

YESSENIN: Not only I, all of us. Ivan Alekseevich.

(Nijinski jumps.)

MISHKIN: He didn't jump higher than his chair! Five inches off the
ground, that's all!

YESSENIN: How high did the chair jump?

MISHKIN *(pause)*: I'm surprised the fire of your wit doesn't melt the ice cap.

YESSENIN: Why do elephants have large ears?

MISHKIN: Why don't you ask them?

YESSENIN: We know why, we're asking you.

REMBRANDT: Why?

NIJINSKI: Why?

MISHKIN *(exploding)*: Because! That's why! Because! Damn it! *(Sur-
prised at his outburst, quietly.)* Because. Damn it.

YESSENIN: How say you, gentlemen?

REMBRANDT: There's nothing to say.

NIJINSKI: The most frightening case of a lack of... can't say of what, but
definitely a frightening case.



Tomorrow, Slovenian Chamber Theater, 1992
Iztok Jereb as Yessenin, Sreco Spik as Rembrandt,
Boris Kerc as Nijinski
Directed by the author



TOMORROW

REMBRANDT: So overwhelming it can't be true.

YESSENIN: Gentlemen, why do we have large ears?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: So we can flutter from flower to flower!

(Mishkin turns to go.)

REMBRANDT: Aren't you interested in the diagnosis?

MISHKIN *(from the door)*: Of your illness?

REMBRANDT: No, yours.

YESSENIN: Nikolai Nikolaievich?

REMBRANDT: Atrophy of two essential organs. Of the center for ha-ha, and of the center for imagination.

NIJINSKI: You're not a jumper, Aleksei Ivanovich, you can't jump higher than your chair.

REMBRANDT: You have small ears, can't flutter.

YESSENIN: I'm sorry, Aleksei Ivanovich, but if you think that you can sit on the bench of this court you'd better think again.

MISHKIN *(with deep concern)*: What happened to you here, Ivan Petrovich? *(He looks at Rembrandt.)* Nikolai Nikolaievich? *(He looks at Nijinski.)* Ivan Alekseevich? What is the cause of your tragedy?

(An explosion of laughter. Mishkin recoils. Goes out. Laughter stops as soon as the door closes. The three judges exchange glances.)

NIJINSKI: What if... *(Pause. Yessenin and Rembrandt look at him.)*
What if Mishkin is right? And there is something wrong with us?

REMBRANDT *(looks at Yessenin)*: Will you, or shall I?

(Yessenin nods. Rembrandt removes his scarf, wraps it round Nijinski's neck and proceeds to strangle him. Nijinski's face turns pink. Gasping for breath, he sinks to his knees. His eyes pop out. Yessenin promptly removes his scarf, wraps it round Rembrandt's neck and tightens it. Rembrandt stops strangling Nijinski and grabs hold of Yessenin's scarf, first with one hand, then with both. Yessenin loosens his grip.)

REMBRANDT: I got carried away. Thank you, Ivan Petrovich.

NIJINSKI *(nursing his throat)*: Mishkin's the one. We're normal.

(Blackout.)



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7.

(Lights. Yessenin is standing behind the table, Nijinski is practising dance steps in front of it. Mishkin is standing close to the door. Rembrandt enters and goes straight to the easel.)

REMBRANDT: Good morning, room. Good morning, fire. Which would be a wonderful fire if we had a fireplace, and enough firewood.

Good morning, birdy-birdies, and flowers –

YESSENIN: Good morning, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

REMBRANDT *(startled)*: Ivan Petrovich! Up so early? Everybody! What's happening?

YESSENIN: Mishkin wants to make an announcement.

REMBRANDT: What, again?

YESSENIN: We're listening, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN *(pause)*: I'd like to suggest a few changes. We have to wake up. Start living again...

REMBRANDT: Am I dead? Why hasn't anyone told me? I must find out... *(Pulls his ear.)* Ouch!... Aleksei Ivanovich, I'm delighted to inform you that the dead don't feel pain, which means that I'm alive. Which means that we're all alive. Which means that we don't have to wake up and start living again.

YESSENIN: Bravo, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

NIJINSKI: What about me? How do I know I'm not dead? *(Pulls his ear.)* It doesn't hurt... I'm dead... Ivan Petrovich!

(Yessenin looks at Rembrandt, who crosses to Nijinski and slaps his face.)

NIJINSKI: What a relief!... Thank you, Nikolai Nikolaievich!

MISHKIN: Ivan Petrovich, this can't go on. I know there's snow outside, and we're chilled to the bone, I know this isn't an ordinary winter. But that's the whole point, don't you see? We have to strike back!

(Pause.)

NIJINSKI: We have to strike back?

MISHKIN: As soon as possible, and decisively!



TOMORROW

(Nijinski crosses to Rembrandt and boxes his ear.)

NIJINSKI *(explaining)*: We have to strike back.

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich. You've brought confusion and uncertainty into our blessed world of ideal balance. In the name of our future I appeal to you in front of witnesses to think again before you continue with this kind of behavior.

MISHKIN: Nothing happens here! Everything... glides past. I feel I'm not real.

YESSENIN: What's so good about feeling real?

MISHKIN: There's no purpose here. Nothing to look forward to.

YESSENIN: Mishkin, I beg you.

MISHKIN: We must have goals – what else can we cling to?

YESSENIN: A moment in time. The present.

MISHKIN: It doesn't last.

YESSENIN: It keeps duplicating itself. It lasts forever.

MISHKIN: I was brought up to believe in tomorrow. Without that I'll float away. Go mad.

YESSENIN: Not if you take up, shall we say, painting.

MISHKIN: I have no talent.

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich can teach you dancing.

MISHKIN: I have no sense of rhythm.

YESSENIN: So what? The idea of perfection in a perfect environment is meaningless.

MISHKIN: Is this what you call perfect environment?

YESSENIN: Any, in which things are allowed to be.

MISHKIN: Things are not meant to be allowed to be! The important day is tomorrow... Tomorrow the snow will melt, work will resume... Why can't you understand? We must live for tomorrow... I propose legal discussions... physical exercises... snow-balling, if nothing else... transcripts of old trials must be examined, discussed, edited... There's a whole life before us, don't you see?

(Pause. A few coughs.)

YESSENIN: Nikolai Nikolaievich?

REMBRANDT: I'd much sooner carry on painting, if you don't mind. Anything legal bores me stiff.



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(Yessenin looks at Nijinski.)

NIJINSKI: I dance. Isn't that exercise?

YESSENIN: As for me –

MISHKIN: You're blind!... All of you!... Blind... Something happened to you here... This winter... I must make you see... Even if I have to stab you in the eyes...

(An outburst of laughter. Mishkin leaves.)

REMBRANDT: "You're blind."

NIJINSKI: "Something happened to you here."

(Laughter. Mishkin enters with a rifle. Laughter stops.)

MISHKIN: Why have you suddenly gone so quiet?

YESSENIN: We're worried.

MISHKIN: Good. That means you haven't entirely lost touch with reality.

YESSENIN: Worried in case you accidentally pull the trigger and blast off your foot.

(Mishkin realizes the gun is pointing at his feet; quickly, he points it at the ceiling.)

REMBRANDT: Worried in case you accidentally blast a hole in the ceiling, so it'll start snowing on top of our heads.

(Mishkin quickly points the gun away from the ceiling, towards Nijinski.)

NIJINSKI: Worried it'll start snowing *into* my head.

(Mishkin quickly points the gun away from Nijinski, towards Rembrandt's painting.)

YESSENIN: Are you going hunting, Aleksei Ivanovich?

REMBRANDT: Has Nikita lent you his gun or have you stolen it?

NIJINSKI: Nikita wouldn't lend his gun to anyone.



TOMORROW

REMBRANDT: A thief as well as a judge!

MISHKIN: I don't mean any harm. On the contrary. I want to help you.

YESSENIN: So far we've managed to help ourselves, but now it seems that only God can help us.

MISHKIN: Where's the Supreme Judge? What does he wear? What's his name?

YESSENIN: How would you like us to answer these questions? One each, or all of us together one question after another?

MISHKIN: There is only one question. Where is the Supreme Judge? Who is the Supreme Judge? What is he like?

(Nijinski, who has counted, raises three fingers.)

MISHKIN: Do me a favor, Nikolai Nikolaievich. Hit him. Give him one before I lose my temper and crack his skull with the butt of the gun.

(Rembrandt looks at Yessenin, who nods. Rembrandt crosses to Nijinski and slaps his face.)

NIJINSKI: Nobody likes me.

MISHKIN: Can't you understand that I'm your friend? And want to remain one? Which of you is going to take me to the Supreme Judge?

YESSENIN: Do you realize what you're asking?

MISHKIN: You have one minute.

REMBRANDT: Don't you know what happens to people who appear before the Supreme Judge uninvited?

MISHKIN: Fifty seconds.

YESSENIN: This is a serious matter, Mishkin, we need a consultation.

MISHKIN: Half a minute.

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski engage in a brief, whispering discussion. They stop and look at Mishkin.)

YESSENIN: I'm sorry, we've failed to reach an agreement.

MISHKIN: All right then, you. *(He points the gun at Yessenin.)*

YESSENIN: Wait a minute. We're faced with a case of departmental disobedience. Rembrandt should take you to the Supreme Judge, but he refuses.

MISHKIN: Ask him again.



Tomorrow, Barons Court Theater, London, United Kingdom, 1994
Gary Drabwell as Mishkin, Michael Bridgeland as Nijinski,
Tomas Lukes as Rembrandt
Directed by Sladjana Vujovic



TOMORROW

YESSENIN: Nikolai Nikolaievich, I order you to take Mishkin to the Supreme Judge and have him charged with unlawful possession of firearms.

REMBRANDT: Sorry, Ivan Petrovich, I can't do that. I like Mishkin too much.

YESSENIN: Nikolai Nikolaievich, this isn't a joke, it's an order.

REMBRANDT: It's against my principles.

YESSENIN: Do you realize that I can send you to the Supreme Judge together with Mishkin?

REMBRANDT: Go ahead.

YESSENIN: As you wish. I order you to take Mishkin *and* yourself and hand both of you over to the Supreme Judge.

REMBRANDT: Why myself?

YESSENIN: For disobeying my order.

REMBRANDT: But if I take Mishkin I'm not disobeying your order.

YESSENIN: Then why don't you take him?

REMBRANDT: Because I don't want to.

YESSENIN: So you *are* disobeying my order.

REMBRANDT: Yes, I am.

YESSENIN: Right. I'm handing you over to the Supreme Judge. Take Mishkin and yourself –

REMBRANDT: I don't want to take Mishkin.

YESSENIN: Then you're again disobeying my order?

REMBRANDT: Why again, this is still the same order.

YESSENIN: For God's sake, Rembrandt. Step over there, next to Mishkin. You'll be handed over to the Supreme Judge this very minute.

(Rembrandt joins Mishkin. Yessenin approaches Nijinski.)

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich, do you mind if ask you something?

NIJINSKI: Why me?

YESSENIN: You saw the Supreme Judge not so long ago. Could you give me an idea of his whereabouts?

NIJINSKI: Saw the Supreme Judge, me?

YESSENIN: Maybe you didn't actually see him, but you must've had dealings with him.

NIJINSKI: Me, dealings with the Supreme Judge, why?



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YESSENIN: Because you're on the bottom rung at this court! Do we understand each other? If you don't tell me where we can find the Supreme Judge, I'll... I'll...

NIJINSKI: Hand me over to the Supreme Judge? (*He steps next to Mishkin.*)

YESSENIN: This is... this is... oh God... My head... (*He ponders. He approaches Rembrandt.*) Judge Rembrandt. I want to relinquish my position of the senior judge. You are in charge. It is now your duty to hand all three of us over to the Supreme Judge.

REMBRANDT (*stepping away from Mishkin*): Is that so?

YESSENIN (*stepping next to Mishkin*): That, I'm afraid, is so.

REMBRANDT: Well, if I'm the senior judge, then *I* can decide who I want to hand you over to the Supreme Judge. Right?

YESSENIN: Right.

REMBRANDT (*turning to Mishkin*): Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin. You are the most junior member of our team. I order you to hand Yessenin, Nijinski and yourself over to the Supreme Judge. You have one minute.

(*Mishkin staggers into the middle of the room and collapses on the floor. He buries his face in his hands and begins to cry. The gun slips from his lap on the floor. Nijinski snaps his fingers. Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 1. Nijinski dances around Mishkin. Yessenin picks up the gun. Nijinski stops dancing, music ends. Yessenin fires the gun into the air, startling Mishkin. Laughter.*)

(*Blackout.*)

8.

(*Lights. Rembrandt is standing in front of the easel, painting. Yessenin is sitting at the table, pondering, making notes.*)

REMBRANDT (*turns and looks at Yessenin*): I don't feel well.

YESSENIN: That's not true, Nikolai Nikolaievich. We all feel well. We always have. We always will.

REMBRANDT: Ivan Petrovich, there're moments when even a grown man feels a need to open his heart to another grown man. Is that still possible?



TOMORROW

YESSENIN: Why do elephants have large ears?

REMBRANDT: I feel we're standing on the edge of an abyss.

YESSENIN: Such feelings are an acknowledged privilege of artistic imagination. There's no need to worry. Mishkin has survived all the crises that were possible. What can he do, other than submit to the prevailing order?

REMBRANDT: If I close my eyes I see... *(Closes his eyes.)*... oh, what horrors...

YESSENIN: Apparitions, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

REMBRANDT: Close your eyes, Ivan Petrovich, and tell me what you see.

YESSENIN *(closes his eyes)*: Nothing.

(Door opens, Nijinski hobbles in on all fours, followed by Mishkin, who is pointing a gun at him.)

YESSENIN *(eyes still closed)*: Besides, Mishkin simply doesn't have the imagination to think of anything new.

(Nijinski hobbles round the room, intermittently glancing back at the barrel of the gun.)

REMBRANDT *(eyes still closed)*: Oh, what horrors... Cross... No... Gallows... We've had it, Ivan Petrovich... What do you see?

YESSENIN: Still nothing. *(Opens his eyes.)* I do see something, but I think it's an optical illusion. *(He rubs his eyes.)*

REMBRANDT *(opens his eyes)*: Yes, definitely an optical illusion. *(Turns back to the easel.)* Good morning, birds... Good morning, flowers...

MISHKIN: Good morning, sun.

REMBRANDT: Good morning, sun...

MISHKIN: Good morning, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

REMBRANDT: Good morning, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: Good morning, Ivan Petrovich.

YESSENIN: Good morning, Aleksei Ivanovich. You look very serious.

MISHKIN: I'm worried.

YESSENIN *(rises)*: Good. That means you haven't entirely lost touch with reality.

MISHKIN: Worried in case I accidentally pull the trigger and blast a hole in your foot.



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(Yessenin, realizing that the gun is pointing at his feet, promptly moves back behind the table.)

MISHKIN *(pointing the gun at the ceiling)*: Or a hole in the ceiling, so it'll start snowing on your heads.

REMBRANDT: That wouldn't be the greatest tragedy.

MISHKIN: No. A far greater tragedy would be if I accidentally put a hole through the life's work of our resident genius.

(He points the gun at Rembrandt's painting.)

MISHKIN *(to Rembrandt)*: Sit down.

REMBRANDT: Why?

NIJINSKI: Sit down, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

REMBRANDT: Generally speaking, I prefer not to sit. However...

(He starts to lower himself on the chair.)

MISHKIN: On the floor.

REMBRANDT *(looks at Yessenin)*: Please tell me that this isn't happening.

YESSENIN: Do as you're told, Nikolai Nikolaievich.

REMBRANDT: I think I'm dead. Why didn't anyone tell me? *(Pulls his ear.)* I feel nothing. Aleksei Ivanovich, I have to inform you that the dead don't feel pain, which means that I'm dead, which means that we're probably all dead, which means that no one can help us any more, not even you.

MISHKIN: Ivan Alekseevich, would you, please.

(Nijinski gets to his feet, crosses to Rembrandt and slaps his face.)

REMBRANDT: Which means that I'm not dead after all.

(Rembrandt sits on the floor. Mishkin looks at Nijinski. Nijinski sits down next to Rembrandt. Mishkin looks at Yessenin. Yessenin joins Nijinski and Rembrandt on the floor.)

MISHKIN: Repeat after me. We're judges.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: We're judges.



TOMORROW

MISHKIN: We acknowledge the error of our ways.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: We acknowledge the error of our ways.

MISHKIN: This is an historic day.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: This is an historic day.

MISHKIN: The circus is closing down, from now on we will behave as befits imperial administrators of justice.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: From now on the truth belongs to Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin.

(Mishkin stares at them. Defiantly, they stare back.)

MISHKIN: I hope you realize the seriousness of your situation.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: I hope you realize the seriousness of your situation.

MISHKIN: Stop.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Stop.

MISHKIN: Get up!

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Get up!

MISHKIN: Shall we dance?

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski scramble to their feet.)

(Mishkin snaps his fingers. March from Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance." Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski exchange glances, line up and start marching in a circle. Mishkin climbs on the table and watches them with an expression of bliss. They march out through the door. Mishkin, with the gun, follows them. They come marching back, followed by Mishkin. They march round the room and out again. They come marching back, each with a shovel on his shoulder, followed by Mishkin. They march round the room and out again. March ends.)

MISHKIN *(off)*: Stand up. Sit down. Stand up. Sit down. Standupsit. Sitdownstand. Which of you can jump higher than his spade? Come on. Hop hop. Hop hop. Why do shovels have large handles?

NIJINSKI *(off)*: So we can hold them better.

MISHKIN *(off)*: All together.



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YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*off*): So we can hold them better.

MISHKIN (*off*): Are we happy?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*off*): Very happy.

MISHKIN (*off*): Feeling well?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*off*): Never better.

MISHKIN (*off*): What do we need?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*off*): Work.

MISHKIN (*off*): What else?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*off*): Goals.

MISHKIN (*off*): Are we tired?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*off*): No.

MISHKIN (*off*): What shall we do now?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Shovel snow.

(Sounds of shoveling. Brief silence. March. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski come marching back, bent, with hands on their backs, moaning, leaning on to each other for support, etc. They're followed by Mishkin with the gun. They march round the room, carrying piles of legal papers, transcripts of trials, etc. They collapse on chairs round the table. Mishkin sits on the bench. Resting the gun on his knees, he points it towards the table.)

REMBRANDT: During that trial, if I'm not mistaken, it was the 333rd clause of the statute that was debatable –

YESSENIN: The clause itself wasn't debatable, because a subclause of this clause states very clearly that all the subclauses of this clause of this statute can be used in a similar sense also with regard to the use of this clause –

REMBRANDT: No, the problem was caused by differing interpretations of the meaning of the word sense. Because according to another subclause of this clause, I believe it was number six –

NIJINSKI (*yawning*): Seven.

REMBRANDT: I believe it was number seven –

YESSENIN: The word sense shouldn't cause any problems, because in legal terms it is always used in its exact meaning, we're not talking here about sense in a philosophical sense, or sense as in common sense, or what sense does it make to go on with this –

(They look at Mishkin. He moves the gun a little, to encourage them to continue.)



TOMORROW

REMBRANDT: If the body has sustained more than one injury it makes sense to determine whether all the injuries were caused with the same object –

NIJINSKI: There may be cases where one injury was caused by, for example, a knife or a sharp stone, and another by, for example, a gun, without a clear indication whether the injury caused by a stone was the result of a fall, and whether the gunshot wound was inflicted deliberately by a criminal or accidentally by a madman –

(Nijinski looks pointedly at the gun in Mishkin's lap. Yessenin and Rembrandt follow Nijinski's gaze. Mishkin, becoming aware of the irony of the moment, points the gun at the floor. Rembrandt rises and goes to the easel.)

REMBRANDT: Good morning, birds...

NIJINSKI: Good morning, flowers...

REMBRANDT: Good morning, flowers...

NIJINSKI: Good morning, sun...

REMBRANDT: Good morning, sun. Nikolai Nikolaievich wants to apologize for neglecting you. *(Picks up the brush.)* Here we're going to add a touch of green...

MISHKIN: No, we're not.

NIJINSKI *(stands up)*: What about me? Haven't I been neglecting my art.

(He snaps his fingers. Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 1. He starts to dance. Mishkin snaps his fingers. Brahms changes to Elgar's "Pomp and Circumstance." Nijinski automatically adjusts his step and marches round the room. Mishkin snaps his fingers. March ends. Nijinski stops, confused.)

YESSENIN *(rises, defiantly)*:

Comfort is what we have,
not what we want.

REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI *(beaming)*:

Drifting like snowflakes,
never touching the ground.



Tomorrow, Serbian National Theater Nis, Serbia, 2004
Predrag Grbic as Mishkin, Dejan Cicmilovic as Rembrandt,
Aleksandar Mihailovic as Nijinski, Aleksandar Krstic as Yessenin
Directed by Dejan Krstovic



TOMORROW

YESSENIN:

We're ephemerons –
our only direction is
that of the wind.

REMBRANDT:

Wind breathes life into moments.

NIJINSKI:

Wind is comfort.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI:

And comfort is what we have.

*(They look at Mishkin, defiantly. Mishkin reaches into his pocket,
pulls out four sheets of paper and hands one to each of his colleagues.)*

MISHKIN: Will you start, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT *(reading)*: Comfort is not what we have, comfort is what
we want?

NIJINSKI *(reading)*: We walk in a straight line, firmly touching the
ground?

YESSENIN *(reading)*: Our only direction is that of our duties?

NIJINSKI *(reading)*: Duty inspires future?

REMBRANDT *(reading)*: Future consecrates the present? – Oh Jesus...

YESSENIN *(reading)*: Duty makes free. *(He laughs.)*

MISHKIN: Well?

REMBRANDT: Well?

NIJINSKI: Well?

YESSENIN: Well?

MISHKIN: Where's the applause?

YESSENIN: Oh... Do you want it?

MISHKIN: Not because I want it, but because it comes from the bottom
of your heart.



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REMBRANDT: Ah, you want a round of applause and shouts, “Bravo, bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich,” as if this were your contribution to our cultural evening?

MISHKIN: For example.

YESSENIN: I think we can do that. Gentlemen?

NIJINSKI: As if from the bottom of our hearts.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*clapping*): Bravo, bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: Stand in line. (*Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski line up.*) Together we shall repeat these truths until they become part of our collective unconscious.

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski bring Mishkin’s verses up to their eyes.)

MISHKIN: Comfort...

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*as if reading*):

Comfort is what we have,
not what we want.
Drifting like snowflakes,
never touching the ground,
we’re ephemerons –

MISHKIN: Stop! (*He crosses to Rembrandt and pulls the paper from his hands.*) What does it say here? Why’re you trying to make a fool of me?

YESSENIN: Old truths seem to be very powerful.

REMBRANDT: Some things are indestructable.

NIJINSKI: Except me. I’m nearly destroyed. And tired.

REMBRANDT: So am I, of potatoes. When are we going to get a hare or at least a small baby bear? When is Nikita going to get back his gun so he can go hunting?

MISHKIN (*stubbornly*): First we need order.

YESSENIN: You’ve established order, Aleksei Ivanovich. What now, that is the question.

MISHKIN (*after pause, lost in thought*): Leave me alone.

REMBRANDT: You need help.

NIJINSKI: And a good lunch, preferably a couple of bear steaks.



TOMORROW

MISHKIN: Please leave me alone.

(They look at him, smiling. He threatens them with the gun. They keep smiling. He raises his hand and snaps his fingers. March. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski line up and march out through the door. Mishkin snaps his fingers. End of march.)

(Brief pause. Then, behind the door, an explosion of laughter. Mishkin sits at the table and starts writing.)

MISHKIN *(tape)*: Dear mother... At last I've managed to enforce order...

(Pause. He forms the sheet into a ball and flings it into the corner. He gets up, reaches for the gun, goes down on his knees and presses the barrel to his forehead. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski watch him from behind the door. Mishkin changes his mind, puts the gun away, pulls out a huge handkerchief and starts to cry. Lights slowly fade to blackout.)

(In darkness, door creaks open. Howling wind, footsteps on frozen snow, running, fading into distance...)

NIJINSKI: Aleksei Ivanovich... Don't... You'll die.. .

(Footsteps and wind fade. Silence.)



Tomorrow, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 1999
Norbert Hainschek as Yessenin, Alfred Haidacher as Nijinski,
Burkhard Minisdorfer as Rembrandt
Directed by Rheinhold Ulryich



TOMORROW

Act Two

1.

(Lights. Rembrandt and Yessenin.)

YESSENIN: What's the matter, Nikolai Nikolaevich? You look so sad.

REMBRANDT: You don't look a model of happiness yourself.

YESSENIN: That surprises me. Because we have every reason to be happy.

REMBRANDT: Undoubtedly. The trouble is, I can't see any.

YESSENIN: We're alone.

REMBRANDT: That is a reason, yes. The question is what for: happiness or grief.

YESSENIN: No more sarcastic remarks at the expense of your... your... genius.

REMBRANDT: No one to slap any more.

YESSENIN: Nikita will have half less to do.

REMBRANDT: I'm afraid he won't like that.

YESSENIN: He'll get used to it.

REMBRANDT: What about us?

YESSENIN: Comfort is what we have.

REMBRANDT: Drifting like snowflakes, never touching the ground?

YESSENIN: Well?

REMBRANDT: But that doesn't apply any more, Ivan Petrovich. From now on it should be, "Drifting like *two* snowflakes, we're *two* ephemerons".

YESSENIN: That does sound rather strange.

REMBRANDT: Not only strange, unreal. I am touching the ground, Ivan Petrovich, I'm very much touching the ground.



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YESSENIN: That's all temporary, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: On top of which no one will dance any more.

YESSENIN: Is that such a pity?

REMBRANDT: It was lively while we had Ivan Alekseevich.

YESSENIN: It can be lively without him. *(He raises his left hand and snaps his fingers. Silence. He raises his right hand and snaps his fingers. Silence.)* You try.

(Rembrandt raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Nothing. He raises his other hand and snaps his fingers. Nothing.)

YESSENIN: You still have art.

REMBRANDT *(looks at his painting)*: I hate this painting. I hate all my paintings. I hate my brush. I hate this place, this court, this time, this life. I hate myself. I hate the entire world. *(Looks at Yessenin.)* What about you?

YESSENIN: I hate it, too.

REMBRANDT *(offended)*: You, too, hate my paintings?

YESSENIN: I meant the world.

(They sit, staring.)

REMBRANDT: Where do you think they are now?

YESSENIN: When did they leave?

REMBRANDT: Ten hours ago.

YESSENIN: Among the dear departed, I should think.

REMBRANDT *(after pause)*: Ivan Petrovich, may I ask you something?

YESSENIN: Go ahead.

REMBRANDT: Will you give me an answer that won't be general, philosophical, poetic, but concrete?

YESSENIN: That's not impossible.

(He produces pencil and a sheet of paper and begins to scribble.)

REMBRANDT *(goes to the window)*: Out there, beyond that white emptiness, beyond all those snowbanks that have no end, beyond that curtain of snowflakes, beyond that wind coming from God knows where, out there, beyond all that surrounds us... is there... is there...



TOMORROW

YESSENIN: Is there what?

REMBRANDT: Is there, beyond all that, a world which isn't white emptiness?

YESSENIN: Perhaps.

REMBRANDT: Which isn't a curtain of snowflakes?

YESSENIN: Possibly.

REMBRANDT: Which isn't wind?

YESSENIN: Maybe.

REMBRANDT: Is that all you can say?

YESSENIN: As it happens I've just, to this end, improvised a little poem.

(He hands Rembrandt the sheet of paper. They step together, face the audience, bow and recite.)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT:

Comfort is what we have,
not what we want –

(They exchange conspirational smiles and start again.)

Comfort is what the two of us have,
not what the two of us want.
Drifting like a couple of snowflakes,
never touching the ground –

(In staggers Nijinski, out of breath, exhausted, dishevelled, shaking. He collapses on the floor in the middle of the room.)

(Yessenin and Rembrandt stare at him. They look at each other. They rub their eyes. They pull their ears. They slap each other.)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT: Ivan Alekseevich!

REMBRANDT: You weren't eaten by wolves.

YESSENIN: Where did you leave Mishkin?

REMBRANDT: How far did you get?

YESSENIN: What did you see?



Tomorrow, Barons Court Theater, London, United Kingdom, 1994
Gary Ross as Yessenin, Gary Drabwell as Mishkin, Michael Bridgeland as Nijinski,
Tomas Lukes as Rembrandt
Directed by Sladjana Vujovic



TOMORROW

REMBRANDT: Any signs that a thaw may be coming?

NIJINSKI (*shakes his head and waves a hand*): Winter, winter, winter...

REMBRANDT: What does that mean?

NIJINSKI (*struggles to his knees and spreads his arms*): Winter...

(He collapses again and lies motionless on the floor.)

REMBRANDT: What does that mean, Ivan Petrovich? That a thaw's on its way?

YESSENIN: What did he say?

REMBRANDT: Winter, winter, winter.

YESSENIN: And what does that mean? That a thaw's on its way?

REMBRANDT: On the contrary, I should think.

YESSENIN: Well?

REMBRANDT (*sigh of relief*): Aaahhh... It's like old times again. Just the three of us.

(Mishkin enters with his mouth open, staring wildly, frozen stiff, hobbling like a walking mummy, unseen by the three.)

YESSENIN: We're ephemerons.

REMBRANDT: Our only direction is that of the wind.

YESSENIN: Wind is comfort.

REMBRANDT: And comfort is what we have. Aaaahhh... (*He picks up his brush and turns to his painting.*) Good morning, birds... Good morning, flowers... Good morning, sun... Nikolai Nikolaevich wishes you –

YESSENIN (*kindly*): A lovely and quiet morning.

(Mishkin collapses on the floor. Yessenin and Rembrandt stare at him, shocked. Nijinski crawls towards Mishkin and collapses on top of him.)

NIJINSKI: Aleksei Ivanovich.... I followed you... I called your name...

I ran after you, shouting: Aleksei Ivanovich, you'll die out there, come back... You didn't wait... And then snow, wind... you vanished...

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich, how far did you get?

REMBRANDT: What did you see?



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MISHKIN (*suddenly lucid*): Ivan Alekseevich, may I touch you? (*He pinches Nijinski's cheek, nose, ear, pulls his hair.*) To see if you're real?

NIJINSKI: Am I? Tell me.

MISHKIN: Does it hurt if I... (*He pinches Nijinski's cheek very hard.*)

NIJINSKI: Ouch!

MISHKIN: I don't know any more... I simply don't know... Is there no way of escaping?

YESSENIN: You're running in the wrong direction.

REMBRANDT: This is where you must escape to.

MISHKIN: I'll evaporate...

REMBRANDT: You must learn the lines of our poem "Drifting like snowflakes, never touching the ground."

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Drifting like snowflakes...

MISHKIN: Drifting like snowflakes...

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Never touching the ground...

MISHKIN: Never touching the ground...

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Our only direction is that of the wind...

MISHKIN: Our only direction... (*He shivers.*) Some other time...

NIJINSKI: Poor Aleksei Ivanovich.

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski lift Mishkin onto the table. Nijinski covers him with his coat. Yessenin adds his. Finally Rembrandt, too, takes off his coat and spreads it over Mishkin. Nijinski removes Rembrandt's coat, rolls it up and pushes it under Mishkin's head. Yessenin and Rembrandt take off Mishkin's boots and start to massage his feet. Nijinski massages his hands. Music: Brahms, "Cradle Song.")

(Lights slowly fade.)

2.

(Yessenin, Mishkin, Rembrandt, Nijinski. The easel has been moved to the middle of the room. It is covered with Mishkin's coat.)

YESSENIN: Gentlemen. We're gathered here today to formally welcome into our midst Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin. For our enjoyment he



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has prepared a cultural program. An exhibition will be followed by a ballet, which will be followed by the results of Mishkin's first excursion into iambic pentameter. *(He claps.)*

REMBRANDT *(clapping)*: Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich, bravo.

NIJINSKI: Our new colleague, Aleksei Ivanovich.

YESSENIN: The work of art which Aleksei Ivanovich is about to unveil was created in complete secrecy –

REMBRANDT: With my brush.

YESSENIN: Almost, as it were, under cover of darkness –

REMBRANDT: With my brush.

YESSENIN: I'm sorry?

REMBRANDT *(confidentially)*: Could you please put it like this: the work of art which Aleksei Ivanovich created with the brush and with the help of kind, unselfish advice from our resident genius?

YESSENIN: Would you be terribly unhappy if I didn't put it like that?

REMBRANDT *(firmly)*: There can be no discussion about it.

YESSENIN: Good, because there won't be any.

REMBRANDT: And one more thing! How can you call it a work of art before you've seen it?

YESSENIN *(crosses to Rembrandt and puts his arm round his shoulders)*: Do you realize, Nikolai Nikolaevich, how important this event is for the restoration of peace and quiet at this court? You've given in to vanity.

REMBRANDT: I've lost my sense of proportion. I'm sorry.

YESSENIN: Have you forgotten how we deal with saboteurs?

REMBRANDT *(offers his cheek to Nijinski)*: Ivan Alekseevich, please.

(Nijinski looks at Yessenin, who nods. Nijinski slaps Rembrandt's face twice with childlike enthusiasm.)

REMBRANDT: Thank you. *(To Yessenin.)* Carry on, please.

YESSENIN: The work of art, or, rather, shall we say, painting which Aleksei Ivanovich created with the brush and with the help of kind, unselfish advice from our resident genius, will, I have no doubt, not only charm every one of us, it will quite simply astonish us. Aleksei Ivanovich, please.

(Mishkin, who has been shivering, "unveils" his painting and gratefully puts on his coat. The painting is very simple: white spots on



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gray background. The three judges stare at it. Nijinski and Rembrandt look to Yessenin for instructions on how to react.)

YESSENIN: Won't you introduce this... this... work of yours, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN: Let me introduce the painting I created with the brush and with the help of kind, unselfish advice from our resident genius.

YESSENIN: Won't you explain aesthetic qualities of this... this... of whatever it is that's before us?

MISHKIN: Aesthetic qualities of whatever it is that's before us are that whatever it is that's before us is entirely worthless.

YESSENIN: Really, Mishkin. We can't agree, can we, gentlemen?

NIJINSKI: More the other way round, I should think.

REMBRANDT: I think that this... this... whatever it is that's before us, in spite of everything does represent something, I really do think so.

MISHKIN (*defiantly*): Well, what does it represent?

REMBRANDT: Footsteps in snow. Footsteps of a drunken bear who was trying, but failing spectacularly, to keep to a straight line.

NIJINSKI: For me personally, this is an abstract cry of a soul trying to find support in gray emptiness. Of a fragmented soul which is left, like snowflakes, to the mercy of the wind.

YESSENIN: For me this artistic expression is no less than proof that it's author would like to surrender to destiny, to drift, to dance like a snowflake –

NIJINSKI: We're ephemerons –

REMBRANDT: Our only direction is that of the wind.

YESSENIN: Because the motif of snow, of careless, weightless floating is, in this autobiographic work, very much in the foreground. And what's this... this... thing of yours called, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN: Little white blobs on a big gray blob. Or, to put it another way: Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin has about as much talent for painting as a toad has for yodelling. Which is even more than Aleksei Ivanovich expected! Applause, gentlemen!

(He claps. The other three join him.)

NIJINSKI: Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich, bravo.

MISHKIN (*bowing*): Thank you, gentlemen, thank you for your genuine admiration. I'm deeply moved, not to say transported. *(He takes off his coat and covers the painting.)*



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YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich, I'm quite simply lost for words.

NIJINSKI: Me too.

MISHKIN: As for me, I can still think of one or two, and if you don't mind I will say them out loud. I've proved that I have no more talent than you –

YESSENIN: Which means we're all equally talented, isn't that wonderful?

REMBRANDT: All equally, but I especially as a painter and artist.

NIJINSKI: And I as a dancer.

MISHKIN (*to Nijinski, in cold blood, destructively*): This unnatural swagger, this grinding movement of the bum, which keeps getting in your way even though it's behind you, this uneven twitching, not unlike that of a motor moron, this pathetic swaying, as if the udder of a pregnant goat were swinging up and down without the goat, this is what you call dancing?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*clapping*): Brilliant, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN (*to Yessenin*): And you, Ivan Petrovich? This epigramatic drivel, these verbal equivalents of belching, these stilted banalities, these shallow profundities tasting of raw potatoes, this is what you call poetry?

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*clapping*): Bravo, bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich, congratulations!

MISHKIN (*to Rembrandt*): And you, Nikolai Nikolaevich...

REMBRANDT: I'm all ears.

MISHKIN: A dog's dinner looks more aesthetic than your brushwork, so I won't waste any words.

YESSENIN: Continue, Aleksei Ivanovich.

NIJINSKI: I haven't had so much fun in years.

MISHKIN (*looking at them*): Is it really impossible to get through to you?

YESSENIN: Your critique has certainly shocked me.

REMBRANDT: I don't think I'll survive it.

NIJINSKI: I'm deeply and permanently scarred.

YESSENIN: There's no doubt that you've discovered your *metier*. Can we relax now? I think we can. Each of us has his hobby. We'll be fulfilling ourselves by painting, dancing and philosophizing about the meaning of life, and you'll be entertaining us by criticizing our efforts.

MISHKIN: I haven't the slightest intention of criticizing your efforts.



Tomorrow, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 1999
Norbert Hainschek as Yessenin, Burkhard Minisdorfer as Rembrandt,
Stefan Ortis as Mishkin, Alfred Haidacher as Nijinski
Directed by Rheinhold Ulrych



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YESSENIN: This role is made for you.

MISHKIN: Are you saying that I have to accept it?

YESSENIN: Nothing of the kind. Here you're perfectly free.

MISHKIN: By that you mean that I'm a prisoner.

YESSENIN: You're free to choose any kind of activity or none.

MISHKIN: Can I judge? No. I'm a prisoner.

YESSENIN: If a cell is too small for you, you're a prisoner. If a court building, ditto. If thousands of square miles of Russia are not enough for you, what are you but a prisoner?

MISHKIN: If we're free here, free to be what we want to be, then obviously there's only one thing that we want to be. Judges.

YESSENIN (*sigh*): Isn't that what we are?

MISHKIN: How, if we're unable to administer justice?

YESSENIN: But we do not speak of justice until the concept of justice has been infringed.

MISHKIN: Then it must be infringed. (*He realizes what he has said.*) Yes. It must be infringed.

YESSENIN (*puts his arm round Mishkin's shoulders*): Aleksei Ivanovich. You've started to behave like our colleague Nijinski. For problems like that we've been forced to invent corrective mechanisms. And now we have no choice but to apply them to you. (*Stepping aside.*) Nikolai Nikolaevich?

(*Rembrandt crosses to Mishkin and slaps his face, twice.*)

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich?

(*Nijinski follows suit. Finally, Yessenin, too, slaps Mishkin twice, with both hands simultaneously.*)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: How do you feel, Aleksei Ivanovich?

(*Blackout.*)



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3.

(Lights. Rembrandt enters and walks towards the easel.)

REMBRANDT *(rubbing his hands)*: Good morning, room... Good morning fire... Good morning, birds... Good morning, flowers... *(Realizes that his painting isn't there.)* Oooooohhhh... Am I dreaming? *(He pulls his ear. He pulls his other ear. He slaps himself twice.)* I'm not. *(He rushes towards the door and collides with Yessenin who is entering.)* Ivan Petrovich, someone's removed my painting.

YESSENIN: You must've taken it to your room.

REMBRANDT: But I haven't finished this one... Or have I?

(He disappears. Yessenin sits at the table and spreads out his papers. Off: sounds of doors being opened and shut.)

REMBRANDT *(off)*: Oh my God... *(Knocking on doors.)* Nijinski... Mishkin... Out... Everyone out... *(Comes running back.)* My room is empty... My paintings have vanished!

(Nijinski enters, followed by Mishkin.)

YESSENIN: How do you mean, vanished?

REMBRANDT: Vanished! Gone! Disappeared!

YESSENIN: Well, they can't have gone up in a puff of smoke...

MISHKIN: They have. *(They all look at him.)* I've burned them. All forty-five immortal works of our resident genius have gone up in smoke. *(Pause. Rembrandt moans.)* Now it's no longer a game. You must punish me. I'll wait in my room.

(Mishkin leaves. Nijinski turns to follow him.)

YESSENIN: Don't, Ivan Alekseevich. Must leave him alone for a while.

(Rembrandt moans.)

(Blackout.)

(Spotlight on Mishkin, writing a letter to his mother.)



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MISHKIN (*tape*): Dear mother... Blizzards are getting worse... the hours of daylight shorter... Soon the long arctic night will begin... Frost, wind, flying snow – we live in hell... However, now that I've imposed order on our community I feel much better... (*Smile of relief and satisfaction.*)

(*Blackout.*)

4.

(*Lights. Yessenin is sitting at the table, reading. Nijinski is practising dance steps. Rembrandt is working on his new painting, which resembles the old one. Mishkin enters and looks at all of them in turn.*)

REMBRANDT: Close the door, Aleksei Ivanovich, I'm suffering from broncho-pneumonia.

MISHKIN: Why're you letting me wait so long?

YESSENIN: How do you mean, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN: I've committed an act of vandalism!

YESSENIN: Yes. Indeed. (*Resumes reading.*)

MISHKIN: You must punish me!

YESSENIN: Why? Nikolai Nikolaevich hasn't lodged a complaint. He's forgiven you. Admirable.

YESSENIN, NIJINSKI (*clapping*): Bravo, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: A wonderful opportunity to develop a new style.

(*An explosion of laughter. Mishkin stares at them, fighting tears.*)

(*Blackout.*)

5.

(*Lights. Mishkin is standing in the corner with a rifle in his hands. Rembrandt enters and proceeds towards the easel in his usual manner.*)

REMBRANDT (*rubbing his hands*): Good morning, room... Good morning, fire... Which isn't there because we have no firewood... And no fireplace... Good morning, my lovely new work of art...



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(As he bends down to pick up the brush he sees Mishkin.)

MISHKIN: Good morning, Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt.

REMBRANDT: Good morning, Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin. What are you doing?

MISHKIN: Waiting for breakfast.

(Yessenin and Nijinski enter.)

MISHKIN: Good morning, Ivan Petrovich Yessenin.

YESSENIN: Good morning, Aleksei Ivanovich. You're well armed, are you expecting an attack?

NIJINSKI: Good morning, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: Good morning, Aleksei Ivanovich Nijinski. Would you be so kind as to do me a favor?

NIJINSKI: Any time, Aleksei Ivanovich, we are friends, are we not?

MISHKIN: Would you please move up against the wall?

NIJINSKI: Why?

MISHKIN: I have a plan I'd like to carry out.

NIJINSKI: Always willing to help. *(He stands in front of the right wall.)*
Although I don't exactly enjoy standing in front of a wall. *(He laughs.)*

MISHKIN: Nikolai Nikolaevich, would you do me a favor as well?

REMBRANDT: I'm not sure that this is the right moment, Aleksei Ivanovich. But any other time, more than willing.

MISHKIN: It's a small thing. *(He removes Rembrandt's scarf and presses it into his hand.)* Would you very kindly blindfold our dancing master?

REMBRANDT *(wraps the scarf back round his neck)*: I have to look after my health.

MISHKIN *(removes Rembrandt's scarf once more, presses it into his hands and prods him with the barrel of the gun)*: Please, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: Not for a moment did I think of denying you this little favor, Aleksei Ivanovich.

(He crosses to Nijinski and begins to blindfold him.)

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich. The security of your symmetrical fantasies is illusory.



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MISHKIN: Is it?

YESSENIN: Blind faith in tomorrow leads to futile sacrifice.

MISHKIN: Does it?

YESSENIN: You're obviously very upset. May I suggest that you postpone the execution of... of... your plan till tomorrow?

MISHKIN: Tomorrow is something you don't recognize.

YESSENIN: Have you forgotten that you're a judge?

MISHKIN: I can't be a judge until I've become an executioner. Ivan Alekseevich, according to custom a man in your position may have one last wish.

NIJINSKI: Thank you, Aleksei Ivanovich. My last wish is –

MISHKIN: – to dance one more time. Please, and make it short.

(Mishkin raises his hands and snaps his fingers. Funeral march. Nijinski marches across the room, turns, marches back. He raises his hand and snaps his fingers. Music ends.)

NIJINSKI: Thank you, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: You're probably wondering why I've chosen you.

NIJINSKI: I'd much rather know how I'm going to feel five minutes from now.

MISHKIN: Better than at any time in your life, Ivan Alekseevich.

(He aims at Nijinski and fires.)

NIJINSKI: What was that sound?

MISHKIN: Why aren't you dead?!

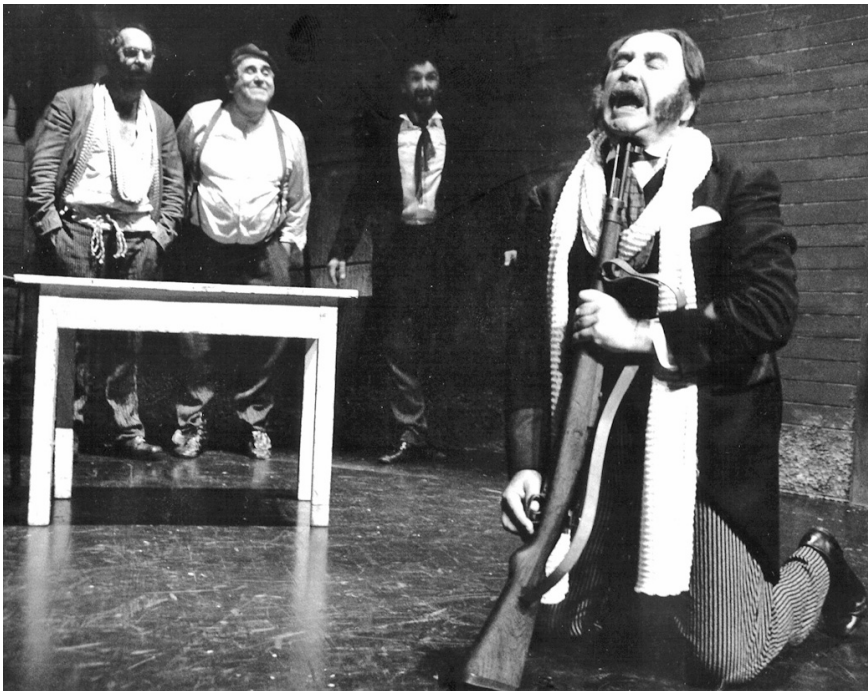
NIJINSKI: Maybe I am. I must pull my ear. *(He pulls his left ear, then his right ear.)* Ouch! I must disappoint you, Aleksei Ivanovich: I appear to be alive.

(Mishkin fires again.)

REMBRANDT: Missing twice from such a short distance? Not much of a shot, are you, Aleksei Ivanovich?

(Mishkin fires at Rembrandt.)

REMBRANDT: Thank you for proving my point.



Tomorrow, Preseren Theater Kranj, Slovenia, 1996
Pavel Rakovec as Yessenin, Polde Bibic as Rembrandt,
Matjaz Visnar as Nijinski, Tine Oman as Mishkin
Directed by Matija Logar



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YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich –

(Mishkin fires at Yessenin.)

YESSENIN: What's the matter, Aleksei Ivanovich? You've now administered justice all around, and still you're not happy?

(Mishkin puts the barrel in his mouth.)

REMBRANDT: One, two, three.

NIJINSKI *(removes the blindfold)*: What's happening?

YESSENIN: Nothing special, our colleague is trying to get rid of his brains.

REMBRANDT: Well, Aleksei Ivanovich? Don't keep us waiting.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: One, two, three.

(Mishkin pulls the trigger. Click. Silence.)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI *(disappointed)*: Oooooooooohhh...

MISHKIN *(drops the gun and buries his face in his hands)*: Oh my God...
Someone please help me...

(Blackout.)

6.

(Lights. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski are kneeling in front of the window.)

YESSENIN: Our only direction is that of the wind.

REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Our only direction is that of the wind.

YESSENIN: Wind breathes life into moments.

REMBRANDT: Wind breathes life into moments.

YESSENIN: Wind is comfort.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: And comfort is what we have.

(They rise, smiling, satisfied.)

YESSENIN *(sigh of relief)*: Aaahhhhh...



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REMBRANDT: Happy days are here again... *(He reaches for the brush.)*

NIJINSKI: Isn't it time we had a little dance?

YESSENIN: I think it is. Nikolai Nikolaevich?

REMBRANDT: I was going to add one or two birds... But they can wait...
(He puts the brush on the floor.)

(Nijinski snaps his fingers. Music: Brahms' Hungarian Dance No. 3. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski joyfully perform a folk dance. Nijinski snaps his fingers. Music ends.)

YESSENIN *(sigh of relief)*: Aaaaaahhh...

NIJINSKI: Peace and quiet at last... *(Starts practising dance steps.)*

REMBRANDT *(picks up the brush)*: Good morning, birds... Good morning, flowers... Good morning, sun... *(Starts painting.)*

(Outside a shot is fired.)

MISHKIN *(off)*: Oh my God... What have I done?

(Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski slowly turn towards the door. Mishkin walks in very slowly, trying to hold the gun away from himself. He looks shocked.)

YESSENIN: Good afternoon, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: Good afternoon, Ivan Petrovich. Good afternoon, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: Good afternoon, good afternoon.

NIJINSKI: Good afternoon, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: Good afternoon.

YESSENIN: Going hunting, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN: I didn't mean to... It just happened.

YESSENIN *(putting his arm round Mishkin's shoulders)*: Intentions are one thing, Aleksei Ivanovich, but life is another, don't worry about that.

REMBRANDT: What happened?

MISHKIN: The gun went off by itself.

REMBRANDT: You've shot off your big toe.

MISHKIN: Something much worse.

NIJINSKI: You've blasted a hole in the ceiling.



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MISHKIN: No, no, something a hundred times, a thousand times worse!

NIJINSKI: What could be worse than a hole in the ceiling?

REMBRANDT: For me, a shot-off big toe would be more of a catastrophe.

MISHKIN: You don't understand... Something unheard-of has happened,
and I'm terribly, terribly sorry... There... *(He points at the door.)*

YESSENIN: Nikolai Nikolaevich, please.

(Rembrandt puts the brush on the floor and goes out.)

REMBRANDT *(off)*: Oh my God... *(He returns, aghast.)*

YESSENIN: What did you see?

REMBRANDT: Oh my God...

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich, please.

(Nijinski goes out.)

NIJINSKI *(off)*: Oh my God... *(He returns, aghast.)*

YESSENIN: What did you see?

NIJINSKI: Ivan Petrovich, please.

(Yessenin goes out. Silence. Rembrandt, Nijinski and Mishkin stare at the door and wait.)

YESSENIN *(off)*: Oh my God...

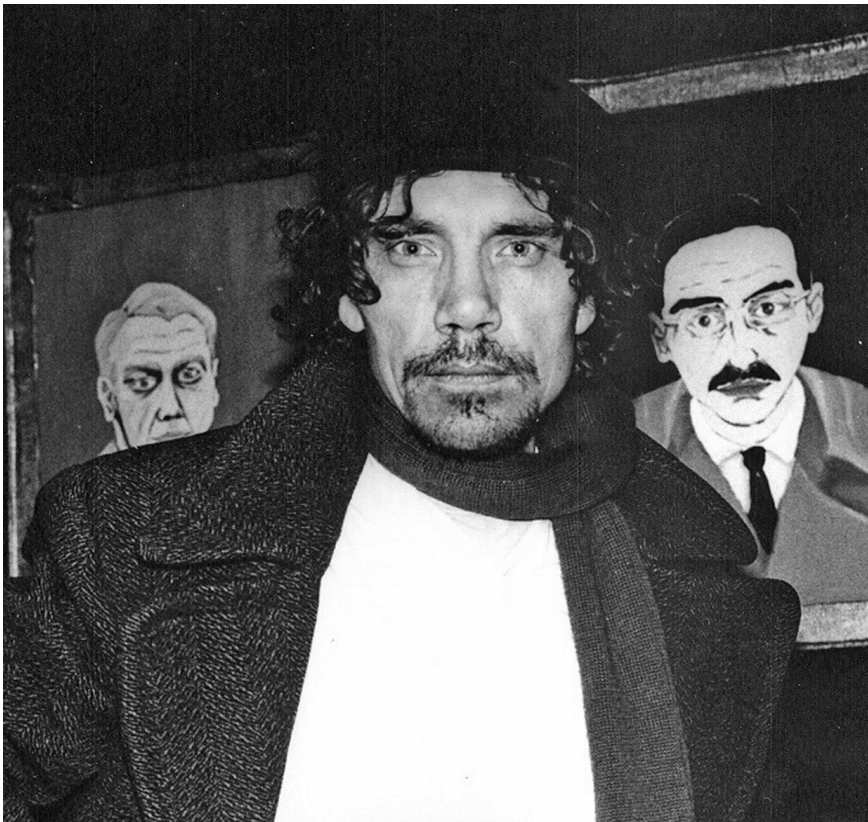
(Rembrandt and Nijinski pull the gun from Mishkin's hands. They tie his hands behind his back with Rembrandt's scarf.)

(Blackout.)

7.

(Lights. A trial. Nijinski, seated on a chair on top of the table, presides. Mishkin, hands tied behind his back, is sitting on a chair facing the "court." Rembrandt, as defence counsel, is standing on the left; Yessenin, as prosecutor, is standing on the right.)

NIJINSKI: The court is in session, will the defendant rise.



Tomorrow, Barons Court Theater, London, United Kingdom, 1994
Tomas Luce as Rembrandt
Directed by Sladjana Vujovic



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YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich, rise.

(Mishkin rises.)

NIJINSKI: Let the prosecution outline the case.

REMBRANDT: Objection. There is no need for the defendant to stand trial with his hands tied.

NIJINSKI: Would you prefer a trial without the defendant?

REMBRANDT: I assure the court that the criminal, I beg your pardon, the defendant has no intention of running away.

NIJINSKI: Objection overruled. The prosecution will state its case.

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin, you're charged with –

REMBRANDT: Objection. Sit down, Aleksei Ivanovich.

(Mishkin sits.)

NIJINSKI: Nikolai Nikolaevich, I warn you that this is a court of law and that I intend to follow the accepted procedure.

REMBRANDT: Procedure demands that the defence must not be denied privileges enjoyed by the prosecution.

NIJINSKI: The court is well aware of that.

REMBRANDT: Will the court then ensure that the procedure is fully respected?

NIJINSKI: Nikolai Nikolaevich... Tell us, as simply as possible, what you want.

REMBRANDT: The trial is taking place in unheated premises at an extremely low temperature.

NIJINSKI: The court is aware of that.

REMBRANDT: The court is enjoying the benefit of a scarf. So is the prosecution. The defence, however, is at the mercy of the elements, which means it can catch a cold, become hoarse, lose its voice.

NIJINSKI *(after pause)*: The defence has a point. Let the defendant be untied.

(Rembrandt unties Mishkin's hands and wraps the scarf round his neck.)

NIJINSKI: The trial continues.



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YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin. (*Circling around him.*) You're charged that on 24 February at two in the afternoon you did unlawfully take possession of dangerous firearms intended exclusively for the provisioning of the court with meat, and handled the said firearms so carelessly and irresponsibly that you caused gunshot wounds which resulted in the death of an innocent man. You're charged with willful negligence which caused the demise, in his prime and with great harm to this court, of Nikolai Sergeevich Dobronosov, affectionately known as Nikita, the Supreme Judge of this court –

MISHKIN (*leaps to his feet*): That's not true!

NIJINSKI: I warn the defendant that the court will not tolerate such behavior.

MISHKIN: That's not true! Nikita was a servant. All right, he wasn't a servant, he was a caretaker, he was... Nikita wasn't a judge!

NIJINSKI: The identity of the victim does not alter the nature of the crime, that must be clear even to the defendant. Continue, Ivan Petrovich.

YESSENIN: You're further charged –

REMBRANDT: Objection.

NIJINSKI: What now again, Nikolai Nikolaevich?

REMBRANDT: It's true that the identity of the victim does not alter the nature of the crime, but this rule, like every other, has an exception. Had the defendant known that Nikita was the Supreme Judge he wouldn't have touched the gun, let alone handled it as if unable to tell the butt from the barrel.

NIJINSKI (*after pause*): The court cannot deny that there is some truth in that. Continue, Nikolai Nikolaevich.

REMBRANDT: The defendant was convinced, and we, his colleagues, did everything possible to reinforce his conviction –

JESSENIN: Objection.

NIJINSKI: Overruled.

YESSENIN: It can't be overruled before it's been stated.

NIJINSKI: Objection upheld.

YESSENIN: It can't be upheld either.

NIJINSKI: All right, state it.

YESSENIN: The defendant should have known that Nikita was the Supreme Judge, since that was perfectly obvious –

MISHKIN: Objection.



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NIJINSKI: Overruled.

MISHKIN: Objection. I demanded a hundred times to be taken to the Supreme Judge, and a hundred times I was turned down. I was told that the Supreme Judge was away on business, that he was too busy to see me, that he was concerned with higher aims, that he wasn't easy to talk to –

YESSENIN: Of course he wasn't, he was dumb.

NIJINSKI: Objection overruled.

REMBRANDT: In the name of my client I protest in the strongest possible terms against the court's way of conducting this trial.

NIJINSKI: Objection upheld.

REMBRANDT: Whose? That of the defence? Or of the prosecution?

NIJINSKI: Defence. Prosecution. Both. I don't know. I warn the defence, and the prosecution, that the court will soon run out of patience.

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich, the prosecution is applying for leave to cross-examine the defendant.

NIJINSKI: Leave granted.

REMBRANDT: Objection.

NIJINSKI: Overruled. Please, Ivan Petrovich.

YESSENIN: Aleksei Ivanovich, please answer my questions clearly and precisely. What did Nikita do when he wasn't in the building?

MISHKIN: He was out hunting bears.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Foxes.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Hares.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Felling trees.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Chopping wood for the kitchen stove.

YESSENIN: We could say that he was away on business. And what did he do when he wasn't away?

MISHKIN: He was cooking.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Sweeping floors.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Making beds. Making tea.

YESSENIN: And?

MISHKIN: Mending clothes.



Tomorrow, Slovenian Chamber Theater, 1992
Boris Kerc as Nijinski, Sreco Spik as Rembrandt,
Bojan Emersic as Mishkin, Iztok Jereb as Yessenin
Directed by the author



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YESSENIN: In other words, while we enjoyed the rare luxuries of art, ballet, poetry and rebellion, Nikita quietly went about attending to higher, the highest, aims. Wasn't it our duty to refrain from interfering with his work?

MISHKIN: It was.

YESSENIN: In other words, living among us was a man who carried the greatest burden of making sure that we didn't freeze to death or die of hunger. Would the Supreme Judge be worth his title if he did not realize that this was his foremost and, in the circumstances, his only duty?

MISHKIN: No.

YESSENIN: Wasn't it obvious, then, that Nikita was the Supreme Judge?

MISHKIN: It was.

YESSENIN: What punishment would you prescribe for a judge who deprived his colleagues of their caretaker, guardian and provider?

MISHKIN (*after pause, smiling hopefully*): The severest punishment the law allows.

YESSENIN: Ivan Alekseevich, prosecution rests its case.

NIJINSKI: Nikolai Nikolaevich?

REMBRANDT: Defense has run out of arguments.

NIJINSKI: Then the court will pass sentence. Ivan Petrovich, Nikolai Nikolaevich, you're required for consultation.

(Yessenin and Rembrandt approach Nijinski. They engage in a brief exchange of views. Yessenin and Rembrandt step back, Nijinski gets up.)

NIJINSKI (*standing on the table*): Aleksei Ivanovich Mishkin. Approach the court.

YESSENIN: Approach the court.

(Mishkin approaches the table.)

NIJINSKI: Although the law states that punishment must fit the crime, we have decided that in your case it must also fit the criminal. You insisted on the severest punishment allowed by law, so you're hereby sentenced to –

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: – being free to choose your own future!



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(They look at him, smiling triumphantly. Mishkin slowly turns, buries his face in his hands, sinks to his knees.)

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI *(bending over Mishkin)*: What will you do, Aleksei Ivanovich?

(Blackout.)

8.

(Lights. Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski are sitting at the table, drinking tea. Mishkin enters and checks the samovar. He refills Rembrandt's mug.)

REMBRANDT: Now this is what I call tea.

NIJINSKI: Out of this world. Can't stop drinking it.

YESSENIN: Strong. Refreshing. Uplifting.

(Mishkin goes to the door and out.)

REMBRANDT *(after him)*: Won't you join us, Aleksei Ivanovich?

MISHKIN *(re-entering, gently)*: I have a joint in the oven.

NIJINSKI: It'll wait. Come and sit down.

YESSENIN: Have some of your excellent tea.

(Mishkin, after some hesitation, sits down next to Nijinski, who hands him his mug.)

NIJINSKI: Take a sip, Aleksei Ivanovich.

(Mishkin takes a sip and hands the mug back to Nijinski.)

YESSENIN: Obviously you find it less refreshing than we do.

MISHKIN: I've already had a few mugs. In the kitchen.

YESSENIN: That's your privilege, no need to feel guilty.

(Mishkin rises.)



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REMBRANDT: But your potato pancakes, Aleksei Ivanovich... No praise is high enough.... They're so...

NIJINSKI: Soft.

YESSENIN: And firm at the same time.

REMBRANDT: They're so...

NIJINSKI: Succulent.

YESSENIN: Flexible.

NIJINSKI: Almost dancing in the mouth.

YESSENIN: Pure pleasure, sheer delight.

REMBRANDT: How do you make them? Or is that a secret?

MISHKIN: A little water, a little flour, a few potatoes. Then I mix.

YESSENIN (*clapping*): Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich.

REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI (*clapping*): Bravo, bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich.

MISHKIN: And now I have to go. (*He moves towards the door.*)

YESSENIN: Of course. The joint.

NIJINSKI (*smacks his lips*): Mmmmmnnnn... I can hardly wait.

REMBRANDT: I don't know if I've already mentioned this, Aleksei Ivanovich, but what you did yesterday is an achievement that makes me proud to know you.

MISHKIN (*turning*): Yesterday?

NIJINSKI: Have you forgotten?

YESSENIN: You shot a bear.

MISHKIN: Oh, that. Nothing special.

REMBRANDT: Such modesty. Won't you tell us how you did it?

MISHKIN: It was quite simple. I made my way to the edge of the forest to see where Nikita was getting the firewood. The bear came towards me. I shot him.

YESSENIN: Just as well there were bullets in the gun instead of blanks!

(Laughter. Mishkin hesitates, then joins in.)

(Blackout.)



Tomorrow, Theater im Keller, Graz, Austria, 1999
Burkhard Minisdorfer as Rembrandt, Stefan Ortis as Mishkin,
Alfred Haidacher as Nijinski, Norbert Hainschek as Yessenin
Directed by Rheinhold Ulryich



TOMORROW

9.

(Lights. Nijinski, dejected, wrapped in his coat, is sitting on the table. Mishkin enters and looks at him.)

MISHKIN: Good morning, Ivan Alekseevich.

NIJINSKI: Good morning. Aleksei Ivanovich. I don't feel well.

MISHKIN: Cold?

NIJINSKI: My head's full of strange silence.

(Mishkin takes off his coat and places it across Nijinski's shoulders. He removes his scarf and wraps it round Nijinski's neck.)

NIJINSKI: You're too kind. Aren't you cold?

MISHKIN: For some time now I've been sleeping under one blanket and only one bearskin.

NIJINSKI: Congratulations.

MISHKIN: Do you know what I think? *(He sits next to Nijinski.)* At the age of twelve I had an appendectomy. When I woke from the narcotic sleep the world seemed... different. Objects no longer seemed so... solid. I often think that perhaps I had died on that operating table, existing all these years in some sort of parallel world.

NIJINSKI: A dream world.

MISHKIN: I believe what's happening to us here is a dream.

NIJINSKI: Pity we haven't got an alarm clock.

MISHKIN: A dream with its own inner logic... To which we must surrender.

NIJINSKI: I have a confession to make, Aleksei Ivanovich. Before you came, there was a week of daily sunshine... very little snow... I set off into the distance... But then, I don't know why, I turned... and ran back... *(Pause.)* And before I came here the same thing happened to Nikita... One day he tried to run away... he set off into the snow... Came back the next day... And never another word...

(Pause.)

MISHKIN: Tomorrow... *(He goes to the window, looks out, comes back.)* Tomorrow I'm going to clear the courtyard, dig a hole and plant some potatoes.



Tomorrow, Barons Court Theater, London, United Kingdom, 1994
Gary Drabwell as Mishkin and Michael Bridgeland as Nijinski
Directed by Sladjana Vujovic





TOMORROW

NIJINSKI: Oooohhh... Even Nikita never thought of that, although he was an excellent Supreme Judge.

MISHKIN: It's got to be done, we're running out.

NIJINSKI: Aleksei Ivanovich, may I ask you something? Still writing letters to your mother?

MISHKIN: I use them to light the fire in the morning.

NIJINSKI: Aleksei Ivanovich... *(He slides off the table and joins Mishkin.)*

MISHKIN: Yes?

NIJINSKI: Why do elephants have large ears?

MISHKIN: One, two, three.

MISHKIN, NIJINSKI: So they can flutter from flower to flower! *(They laugh.)*

MISHKIN: The only thing I'm afraid of...

NIJINSKI: I'm listening.

MISHKIN: That one day I may realize that this isn't a dream at all. Ivan Alekseevich, may I ask you for the usual favor?

(He offers Nijinski his cheek. Nijinski slaps it with childlike enthusiasm.)

MISHKIN: Thank you.

NIJINSKI: How do you feel?

MISHKIN: At peace. The main thing is that we all have our delights. I have potatoes which I'll start propagating tomorrow, our resident genius has his water colors... *(He pauses in front of Rembrandt's painting.)* Good morning, birds...

NIJINSKI: Good morning, sun...

MISHKIN, NIJINSKI: Nikolai Nikolaevich Rembrandt wishes you a very good morning! *(They laugh.)*

MISHKIN: Ivan Petrovich has his verses –

NIJINSKI: We're ephemerals –

MISHKIN, NIJINSKI: Our only direction is that of the wind! *(They laugh.)*

MISHKIN: And you have rhythm, the beauty of movement, ballet.

NIJINSKI *(looks away)*: Yes.

MISHKIN: What's the matter, Ivan Alekseevich? That was meant as a compliment.

NIJINSKI: Look.



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(He snaps his fingers. Silence. He snaps the fingers of his other hand. Silence.)

MISHKIN: Wait a minute. *(He snaps his fingers.)* Nothing? *(Nijinski shakes his head.)* What about this? *(He snaps the fingers of his other hand. Nijinski shakes his head.)* And this?

(Mishkin snaps the fingers of both hands. Music: Dvorak's Slavonic Dance No. 7.)

NIJINSKI: Ooohhhh... *(Music ends.)* I've never heard this before. Why don't I hear the old music any more?

MISHKIN: It's time for something new.

NIJINSKI *(excited)*: You mean to say... *(He snaps his fingers. Silence.)*

MISHKIN: You have to get used to it.

(Mishkin snaps his fingers. Music: Dvorak's Slavonic Dance No. 7. Nijinski starts dancing.)

NIJINSKI: Oooohhh... Aleksei Ivanovich... I'm dancing... Aleksei Ivanovich...

(He holds out his hand. Mishkin takes it, they dance together. Yessenin and Rembrandt enter and look on, amazed. Nijinski sees them.)

NIJINSKI: Ivan Petrovich... Nikolai Nikolaevich... I've invented a new dance...

YESSENIN *(claps)*: Bravo, Ivan Alekseevich.

(Mishkin and Nijinski stop dancing. Music ends.)

REMBRANDT, MISHKIN *(clapping)*: Bravo, bravo, Ivan Alekseevich.

NIJINSKI *(bowing)*: Thank you, thank you.

REMBRANDT: Ivan Petrovich, too, has a new poem, and I must say it's very interesting!

YESSENIN: Well, different. *(He pulls four sheets of paper from his pocket.)* I've made a copy for each of us –

MISHKIN: So that the new work of art can become part of our collective unconscious, well done. *(He reaches out for his copy.)*



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YESSENIN (*handing copies to Rembrandt and Nijinski*): The thing about this poem is that we have to recite it simultaneously, each his two lines. Only so will it reveal its –

MISHKIN: Astonishing beauty, congratulations, Ivan Petrovich. I suggest we begin.

YESSENIN: Ready?

REMBRANDT: One, two, three.

(They recite simultaneously.)

YESSENIN:

Barabumba bimbirumbi
barambaba bambirabi

REMBRANDT:

Bromborombor brumbi
grembibimbi grumbirabi

NIJINSKI:

Borebamber yamber kamber
grumber mamber gorebamber

MISHKIN:

Paradinga bingaringa
mingaringa ringaraya

(In the cacophony of sounds Yessenin, Rembrandt and Nijinski gradually become aware of the word “ringaraya”; surrendering to its spell, they abandon their lines and start repeating it. They join arms across their shoulders, Nijinski snaps his fingers. Music: Dvorak’s Slavonic Dance No. 2. The four judges, chanting “ringaraya,” perform a children’s dance. Mishkin snaps his fingers, music ends, they stop dancing.)

REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI, MISHKIN: Bravo, Ivan Petrovich, bravo, bravo...



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MISHKIN (*climbs onto the table*): Gentlemen. Before we devote ourselves to our activities I want to say a few words.

YESSENIN, REMBRANDT, NIJINSKI: Bravo, Aleksei Ivanovich, bravo.

MISHKIN: The dark tunnel in which we got lost is behind us. Before us is a long and fruitful period, perhaps not of luxury and bliss, but certainly of peace –

(Loud knocking. The judges turn towards the door, exchange glances, decide to ignore the sound.)

MISHKIN: In this period of peace, for which we have waited so long, and which we deserve –

(Knocking, loud, insistent. The four judges slowly turn towards the door. Mishkin climbs off the table.)

MISHKIN: Nikolai Nikolaevich, please.

(Rembrandt walks to the door, hesitates, looks back. Knocking is repeated. Rembrandt goes out. Silence. Mishkin, Nijinski and Yesenin wait. Rembrandt returns, pausing at the door.)

MISHKIN: Well?

YESSENIN: Well?

NIJINSKI: Well?

REMBRANDT (*as if unable to believe*): There's someone outside.

MISHKIN: And?

YESSENIN: And?

NIJINSKI: And?

REMBRANDT: He says he's a judge.

MISHKIN: So?

YESSENIN: So?

NIJINSKI: So?

REMBRANDT: He's come to administer justice.

(An explosion of laughter. Silence. The four judges line up, turn towards the door and wait.)

(Lighs slowly fade to blackout.)