

A VITAL SENSATION

Or the other Fiesole

(Brief theater)

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Play for 2 actors

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November, 2014

*Insist on contemplation, defer opinion
until the gravity of a vital sensation is born.*

Peter Handke

CHARACTERS

ONE

OTHER

1

*Police station basement.
Unintelligible murmur of various conversations.
We listen to the conversation that interests us.*

ONE: And where did they catch you?

OTHER: In 13 with 25. (*Defensively.*) But I was not at the rally.

ONE: Ah, right?

OTHER: I don't even get into politics.

ONE: If you don't get into politics, others will, and they will decide for you.

OTHER: I don't like politics. There've been many fights over politics back home. Some get real ugly.

ONE: I'm guessing that your family has those that like the government and those who don't, right?

OTHER: Exactly.

ONE: Well, I'm lucky that my entire family hates them.

Silence.

ONE: And what were you doing when they got you?

OTHER: Nothing. I was just out and about. I was looking for a taxi. I'd left a friend's house who I hung out with. Mom called me on my phone, around six, to warn me about the disturbance. She told me to stay at my friend's, but I didn't listen.

ONE: Do you see how useless it is to stay on the sidelines on politics?

OTHER: Sorry?

ONE: It's what most people don't understand: politics always reaches us.

OTHER: What are you on about?

ONE: That politics always reaches us: just like me, you are here in prison.

OTHER: So you were at the rally?

ONE: And threw a few Molotovs.

OTHER *moves a bit from* ONE.

OTHER: I shouldn't be here. I haven't done anything. I was only passing by... I'm innocent!

ONE: Doesn't make a difference for them. What they want is to intimidate us, terrify us, put fear in us so that we accept all their decisions without question, like lambs, so that we stay home and not go out to protest.

OTHER: I'm sure that everything will be clear soon and they'll let me out.

ONE: (*Mockingly*) Ah, so you are one of the naive ones believe we still live in a democracy.

OTHER: I've told you that I don't get into politics.

Short pause.

ONE: How old are you?

OTHER: Eighteen.

ONE: Do you study?

OTHER: I just started university.

ONE: What career?

OTHER: Computing.

ONE: Of course! There, in your faculty, people don't ever get into any trouble. They're all cowards!

OTHER: We just want to graduate.

ONE: And for what? (*Sardonic.*) To work, be useful and "Contribute to society"?

OTHER *does not respond.*
He shrugs.

ONE: Wake up! If we don't fight for our rights, when you graduate, there will be neither country nor society with which to contribute much less one that you can be useful in!

OTHER: I think you're exaggerating.

ONE: (*Ironically.*) You think?

A thunderous siren sounds.
Shock and commotion occurs.

OTHER: What's that?

ONE: I don't know.

OTHER: It looks like someone is talking.

They both go where the voice comes from.

VOICE IN

OFF: (*Talking louder than the commotion.*) Hello everybody! Good evening. How're you doing? Are you comfortable? Well, now get ready because we're looking to take you for a walk.

OTHER: Are they letting us go?

ONE: Doubt it.

OTHER: (*Scared.*) So, where are they taking us?

ONE: Your guess is as good as mine.

2

Again at the basement.

Enter ONE followed by OTHER.

ONE walks with difficulty.

They are both naked, in their underwear.

ONE: Sons of bitches!

OTHER: Shut up! Please shut up!

ONE: I'll shit on the fucking mother who gave birth to them all! Damn! Damn sons of bitches!

OTHER: You want to calm down for god's sake?!

ONE: How can you want me to calm down? After what those men did to me?

As much as he tries to avoid it, he does not succeed; he collapses and begins to cry.

OTHER does not know what to do.

Long silence.

OTHER: Does it hurt?

ONE: *(Calmer, wiping tears.)* Do you still think we're in a democracy?

OTHER: If they tell me that, I won't think it so.

ONE: Well, it's about time you started to realize it.

OTHER: We'll get out of here. I promise.

ONE: Don't be dumb.

OTHER: I mean it. Right now my family must be moving heaven and earth to get me out and I swear to you I won't leave without you.

ONE just looks at OTHER; indifferent.

OTHER: Well, if you really want me to help you, getting you out of here is exactly that. You want out?

ONE: Your family won't even know you're detained.

OTHER: Of course they know!

ONE: And how can they know?

OTHER: Because my friend must have called my mother and having told him.

ONE: Your friend?

OTHER: Yes, my friend, the guy I hung out with... He was with me when I decided to return home and look for a taxi...

ONE: And how did they not catch him?

OTHER: Because when the cop told us to stop, he ran.

ONE: And why didn't you run?

OTHER: I thought that if I obeyed, if I collaborated with the cops, they would let me be on my way.

ONE: Hmm!

OTHER: What? I hadn't done nothing. Why then should I have fled? Who does not owe it does not fear it.

ONE: Maybe that works in countries that are more civilized, but here, with this military government... I told you, this is not...

OTHER: I know, I know. This is not a democracy. It's the third time you've told me.

ONE: Well, let's see if at some point you wake up and notice it.

OTHER: My family will find a way to get us out.

ONE: Do they have a good contact in the government?

OTHER: My grandfather, on my father's side, from the beginning, has sympathized with the government. Has supported them in every way. I guess he's bound to have some sort of contact.

ONE: I assure you that what you just said has sounded neither very convincing nor very encouraging.

ONE *shrieks*.

OTHER: Does it hurt?

ONE: So much.

OTHER: You shouldn't have upset them.

ONE *just looks at* OTHER.

OTHER: If you had done what they asked you, maybe...

ONE: I don't like being a sheep.

Short pause.

OTHER: I believe that living is more important.

ONE: How?

OTHER: I mean, stay alive for the fight... I think that's more important.

ONE: Hah! Don't come to me with advice when just a second ago you said that you don't care about politics.

OTHER: Not anymore.

ONE: Not anymore?

OTHER: After what we've been through...

ONE: You're one to talk! They haven't touched a hair on your head! They haven't touched not a hair of you.

OTHER: But I've seen what those people have done to you and those other guys... After all that, I can't stay indifferent.

Silence.

ONE: Are you serious?

OTHER: Very serious.

ONE: (*Smiles, satisfied.*) Then it was worth going through what I've been through...

OTHER: Don't say that. No one, under any circumstances, should go through what you and those other guys have.

ONE: (*With unequivocal conviction.*) Well, I would give myself again in the hands of those sons of bitches if it guaranteed another pair of hands to the fight.

*They look at each other.
There is childish complicity in her eyes.
Silence.*

ONE: Tell me: What did you feel?

OTHER: Me? A while ago? When the military did that...?

ONE: Yeah.

OTHER: (*After a pause.*) I felt anger, indignation... But also very scared.

ONE: We all feel fear at times like this.

OTHER: You too?

ONE: Especially me.

OTHER: Then why do you do it?

ONE: Because I don't want fear to paralyze me in front of the injustice.

OTHER: I couldn't.

ONE: Sometimes it's just an impulse, something irrational that stirs inside, and I know I must react in the next second because if not fear will take over my will.

OTHER: No, no. I definitely wouldn't be able...

ONE: Someday you will be. When that rage and that outrage you felt are greater than your fear, then you will dare to take the first step and rebel against the orders and wishes of these sons of bitches... Then you'll be a tough guy, even if you continue to feel fear...

*A thunderous siren sounds.
Again there is shock and commotion.*

OTHER: Is it them again?

ONE: It seems so.

OTHER: (*Scared.*) Will they come back to...?

ONE: Calm down you.

They both go where the voice comes from.

VOICE IN

OFF: (*Talking louder than the commotion.*) It's your bedtime! Surely you're all very tired by now. Make yourself at home. The cell is small, but if you work together, everyone can have a little bit of sleep. I suggest everybody takes turns. While some remain standing, others could lie on the ground... Those lying on the ground will notice how cold and hard the floor is... The night will be very long. We'll turn off the lights so you're all more comfortable. Oh! And watch out for the rats and cockroaches. We're infested the ministry haven't sent any fumigators yet.

Blackout.

ONE: Don't worry, hard times go by, tough guys don't.

OTHER: (*With a shaky, broken voice.*) Yes, tomorrow will be another day.

THE END