

The Kitchen

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THE PLAY

Three characters keep meeting repeatedly in random places and engage into a conversation about their lives, their hopes, their wishes and, mainly, their loneliness.

"We are all looking for someone", is the sort of mantra that keeps resounding in their conversations. But there's people who will do whatever it takes to overcome the solitude.

CHARACTERS

FOREIGNER: In his mid-thirties. A lonesome person arriving into an unknown town. Looking for someone.

BROTHER: In his mid-thirties. A local person. Dissatisfied. Grumpy and sad.

SISTER: In her mid-twenties. Lost in her memories, lives in the past.

Scene One

An empty stage, neutral. Maybe a stone bench or some outdoor chairs on which the characters can sit.

A constant rain.
Two strangers.
Waiting. Standing under the rain.

The FOREIGNER looks tired and his clothes are soaking wet.
The BROTHER wears a suit and a badly knotted tie that makes him uncomfortable.
Both characters are standing a bit far away from each other. They do not look at each other. They don't look at anything in particular either.

BROTHER *[After a while. Not looking at the FOREIGNER] How old am I?*

FOREIGNER What?

BROTHER *[Same attitude] How OLD am I?*

FOREIGNER *[Looking briefly at the BROTHER with little interest] Don't know... I'm not good at this kind of things...*

BROTHER Well, if you don't practice, you'll never be...

FOREIGNER *[Hesitates] Ummph... well... look... [lies nervously and in a very unconvincing manner] right now I'm kind of waiting someone and...*

BROTHER *[Staring directly into the FOREIGNER's face] And aren't we all?*

FOREIGNER What's that?

BROTHER Aren't we all waiting for someone?

FOREIGNER *[Hesitates. Looks at the BROTHER for a while and tries to change the topic] Well, I... I don't... I... [pause] if... if you don't mind... [pretends to be leaving. But he doesn't move]*

[The BROTHER remains quiet and looks at the FOREIGNER]

BROTHER You are not from here, aren't you?

FOREIGNER No. I'm just passing by...

[Pause]

BROTHER You have no luggage... where are you going?

FOREIGNER I don't know... *[lowering his voice]* I haven't decided it yet...

BROTHER Will you leave with the person you are waiting for?

FOREIGNER Who?

BROTHER You mentioned you were waiting for someone...

FOREIGNER Oh... I don't know... *[pause]* maybe... yes... I... I really hope so...

BROTHER You seem like a reasonable person, what stops this person from going with you?

FOREIGNER Me not being able to convince her that... *[but he stops talking. He doesn't dare saying it to a stranger]* Well... it... it doesn't matter... I'm quite sure I won't be able to convince her no matter what I tell her and I'll have to go back to...

BROTHER *[Getting closer to the FOREIGNER nervously, interrupting him]* Don't go back! Now that you have left... don't go back... Listen to me: you already know what you are leaving behind... it never changes... Never. It doesn't matter how many years go by, the past is always the same... no. Don't go backwards.

FOREIGNER Maybe you are right...

BROTHER Of course I am! I know what I'm talking about...I've committed that same mistake... for a while I managed to escape from here, I went far away hoping for a new beginning... but the past always catches up on you... regardless of your attempts to run away from it... if

you're not extremely careful, it always hunts you down... like the experienced hunter that it is, time always gets us. The only hope is to escape. Listen to me. The only hope is to run away and never come back. Do you hear me? Run away and never come back!

[Pause]

- FOREIGNER** So you're from here...
- BROTHER** Was born here and I'm beginning to accept that I will also die in here... it's my cage.
- FOREIGNER** Some cages have doors...
- BROTHER** Don't give me that shit!
- FOREIGNER** *[Moving one step backwards scared]* No... I just meant that...
- BROTHER** I know perfectly well what you meant! *[Getting closer to the FOREIGNER]* I've heard it all before! *[Starts walking up and down while he talks. Nervously]* Nobody forces me to stay here... I can do whatever I like... I can go whenever I want to... I'm Free... FREE! What the hell? Free from what? As soon as we are born we are already tied up! Free! The school, your parents, your work, the bills... which freedom is that? Huh? Tell me! Which freedom is that?
- FOREIGNER** I... I don't know...
- BROTHER** I'll tell you which freedom it is! The Frankfurt School's freedom!
- FOREIGNER** What?
- BROTHER** They warned us about it all... about everything! They did... and almost a hundred years ago!
- FOREIGNER** Who?
- BROTHER** *[Getting even closer to the FOREIGNER in a conspiratorial voice]* It doesn't matter who. It matters what.
- FOREIGNER** And what is that?

BROTHER We are not free. They make us believe that we are... they are interested in having us believing that we are free... that we can do as we please, that we can choose... but it ain't true: we can't... well, no, actually, we can... in fact, we must choose! And that's the problem! That's the catch! You see? We have to choose! We have to choose which car we are going to buy... which shoes... *[untying his tie]* which tie... but that's not being free! If we were really free... we could choose not to choose... You see? We should be Free to choose not to buy anything... Get it? *[pause]* But that... that's what they won't let us do! Just imagine it! People not buying! Just the thought! All our system would collapse if we stopped buying!

[Silence]

FOREIGNER Well... I'm... I... I think I'll better go...

BROTHER I'd like to say you're free to go, but you aren't...

FOREIGNER ... it's getting late... *[but he doesn't go]*

BROTHER And the person you were waiting for?

FOREIGNER She won't come.

BROTHER How come are you so sure about it?

FOREIGNER Because we haven't arranged any meeting.

BROTHER Then... if you don't mind... I will make you company while you wait for her...

FOREIGNER *[Stares at the BROTHER for a while, like analysing him]*
Suit yourself *[and he goes to sit placidly on the bench]*

[The BROTHER also sits on the bench and looks up to the sky mumbling]

BROTHER Bloody rain!

[The FOREIGNER doesn't reply. Keeps his eyes fixed at nothing, absent-minded]

FOREIGNER When I was a kid I liked the rain... *[Pause]* I found it magical... water falling from the sky! It was unbelievable... I remember... I remember sneaking out of the house and into the street to get myself soaked by the rain... *[stretching his arms]* I stretched my arms and... *[tilting his head up and closing his eyes]* I let the water fall on my face, my hands... my whole body... and I felt happy... really happy... for a while, at last, until my mum cried her lungs out and *[lowering his head and arms and opening his eyes]* sent me back to my sad reality...

BROTHER I told you so: since the day you're born, you are not free...

FOREIGNER I loved the rain...

BROTHER I don't like it at all... I find it an annoying inconvenience.

FOREIGNER Maybe you're right... *[and lifts up his head again to look at the rain]* but even though... I still find it magical...

BROTHER Because you must be one of those who still believe in magic.

FOREIGNER What else is left for us to believe in?

[Silence]

BROTHER *[Looking at his watch]* Shit! I gotta go... *[he stands up and walks towards the right side of the stage]* Enjoy the rain...

FOREIGNER *[Without looking at him]* 35.

BROTHER *[Stops right at the edge of the stage]* What's that?

FOREIGNER I think you are 35 years old...

[The BROTHER looks at the FOREIGNER for a while but he doesn't reply]

FOREIGNER *[Somehow begging for mercy]* Am I close?

BROTHER No... you know you are not. But it doesn't matter *[and he leaves]*

FOREIGNER Actually, you're right...

[The FOREIGNER looks for a while towards the right side of the stage, to the absence left by the BROTHER. Then, slowly, he stretches his arms up, lifts his head and closes his eyes]

[The SISTER comes in from the back of the stage carrying two heavy loaded bags full of groceries]

[Visibly tired, the SISTER goes toward the bench where the FOREIGNER is. He hasn't noticed her yet]

[The SISTER examines the FOREIGNER's odd posture and, after deciding that he is not some sort of rapist, she leaves the bags on the floor, next to the bench]

[The FOREIGNER opens his eyes surprised by the noise of the bags but keeps his arms up for a while]

[Simultaneously to the FOREIGNER lowering his arms, the SISTER sits on the bench trying to gain her breath back]

[The FOREIGNER remains quiet eyeing the floor]

[The SISTER hesitates. Looks around her. Stands up nervously]

[The FOREIGNER glimpses at her discreetly]

SISTER *[Getting closer to the FOREIGNER and in a soft voice]*
Are you alone?

FOREIGNER Yes.

SISTER *[Looking around]* Do you want some company?

FOREIGNER Who doesn't?

[The SISTER sits next to the FOREIGNER, so close that she is almost touching him]

[Silence]

SISTER What are you doing here?

FOREIGNER *[Closing his eyes]* Pssshhhtt. Don't say anything...

SISTER Why not?

FOREIGNER I like the silence.

[The SISTER shuts up. Tries to be quiet, but she feels awkward]

SISTER And why do you like it?

FOREIGNER *[With his eyes shut still]* It calms me down.

SISTER Are you nervous?

FOREIGNER *[Opening his eyes]* Always.

SISTER Why?

FOREIGNER Don't know... just because... I have lots of troubles lately...

SISTER *[Getting even closer to the FOREIGNER]* Do you want to explain them to me?

FOREIGNER *[Now he is awkward]* I rather not.

SISTER *[Sweet]* Hiding them inside of you won't make them go away...

FOREIGNER Sharing them with a random stranger neither...

[Silence]

SISTER No. You're right. *[She stands up]* Sorry to bother you...

FOREIGNER *[Begging]* Don't go, please...

[The SISTER hesitates. Looks around but doesn't dare to sit down again]

FOREIGNER I don't want to be alone...

SISTER *[Sits down]* Me neither...

[Silence]

SISTER My sister...

FOREIGNER Don't talk, please...

SISTER *[Looking at the FOREIGNER for a while]* If you want me to stay, I'll talk.

[The FOREIGNER looks at the SISTER for a while]

[Silence]

FOREIGNER *[Defeated]* OK.

SISTER My sister... my sister was younger than me... not much, though... only by eleven months... my parents really went for it... or were crazy... or both, I don't know... never understood them... but because we had such a similar age, with my sister, I mean, not my parents because that would've been quite weird, don't you think? *[pause]* Anyway, me and my sister got on well with each other... really well, I mean... we were always together... we played together... grew together... we were what you could say inseparable. Wherever one was going, so did the other. Always. Like twins. More than that: like Siamese sisters. Always together... one filling the other's void. Together. Always. *[Pause]* Until she disappeared.

[The FOREIGNER stares at the SISTER unable to say anything]

SISTER At the beginning we thought that someone had taken her. That she had been kidnapped and that sooner or later they would demand a ransom for her... we were not rich or anything, but she was so little and so pretty that we guessed... don't know... people are desperate and they know parents will pay anything to get their kids back... and who wouldn't? I mean, it's only money at the end of the day, you know what I mean? but a child... that's priceless, isn't it? *[pause]* mum run every morning to the mailbox hoping to find in it a note from the kidnappers, some sort of hope... every single day... losing a piece of her heart every time she found the mailbox empty... *[pause]* weeks went by, months... and every day my mum struggled a little more to reach the mailbox, every time she was weaker and weaker... until one day she couldn't leave the house at all *[pause. Pointing towards a non-precise direction]* She is still there... incapable to remember anything anymore... more confused and lost everyday... more and more outcast from this world... but waiting still for her daughter, stubbornly... *[pause]* Sometimes I wonder if she stills remember what she is waiting for... she's just there... waiting by the kitchen... It's so painful to see her like that... I just come from there now... *[pause]* it's sad to see how a whole life is vanishing like that... just in front of your eyes... without being able to do anything to prevent it...

FOREIGNER At least she has you... she's not alone...

SISTER *[Staring directly the FOREIGNER. Sadly, inquisitively]* What good is the company to someone that after every second is less herself?

FOREIGNER Maybe for that: so you can remind her who she is... who she was...

SISTER I don't know... every time I go there... *[she doesn't dare to say it, but she has the need to say it]* I... I promise myself that it will be the last time I go there... I can't take it anymore... my heart breaks when I see her like that... I know it sounds extremely selfish... I do... but I honestly cannot take it anymore...

FOREIGNER *[He tries to hug the SISTER, but at the end he doesn't dare and stops halfway through]* I understand you... but you cannot leave her alone... loneliness is the worst punishment...

SISTER I know... I know too well the loneliness of those who've been abandoned... but... but... *[pause]* I... *[stands up nervously and grabs her grocery bags]* I... I think I better go...

FOREIGNER *[Standing up as well]* Do you need a hand? These bags look really heavy... *[and remains standing throughout the SISTER's monologue]*

SISTER *[Leaving the bags on the bench. Looks at them sadly for a while and, then, in a confessional, sad, voice]* They are... Whenever I go shopping, I always buy two items of each product... two apples, two bananas, two rice bags, two milk cartons... it makes me feel like... like I'm not alone... like he's still with me... I know it makes no sense, that I end up accumulating groceries that I cannot eat and get wasted and I have to throw them away... but I can't help it. I can't. *[pause]* I began doing it when he left... as if I wanted to fool everyone else, to pretend I wasn't alone... as if anybody cared if I was alone or not! Nobody really cares about the others. Now I know that. But then... I was only trying to fool myself... me! Imagine that! Of all the people in the world... me, who was the most conscious of my loneliness! *[Pause. Plays distractedly with the bags]* I should've quit doing it long time ago... I know... but... but... I think... I believe that while I keep doing it... it will be like he isn't really gone... not completely, at least... as though my loneliness, despite everything, is not absolute... *[looks at the FOREIGNER]* while I keep buying two items of each product... I don't have to accept the fact that I'm alone and that I will probably be alone forever...

FOREIGNER At least you've had the chance to experience company... I don't know how does it feel like having someone who loves you next to you day after day...

[Silence]

SISTER You should be grateful for that. I would give everything, everything!, to have never lived with him. To have never shared the nights, the days, the mornings... to have never laughed together, to have never walked in the park... I'd give everything! Everything! To have never touched happiness with my fingertips... maybe the pit in which I'm right now wouldn't be so dark... *[sits defeated and hides her face between her hands]*

FOREIGNER *[Walking towards her]* I'm sorry... I didn't meant to... forgive me...

SISTER *[Lifting her head slightly and looking at the FOREIGNER]* It's not your fault... it's me... it's my life... you don't even know me... no. *[Avoiding the FOREIGNER's eyes]* There's nothing to envy me for! To have had it all and then lose it... that's what real pain feels like!

[Silence]

FOREIGNER And why did he leave?

[The SISTER lifts her head up and looks at the FOREIGNER]

[The FOREIGNER steps back scared by her look, tempted to take the question back]

SISTER *[Standing up and walking in circles around the bench]* I don't know... that's what really pisses me off... don't know why he left! If he had abandoned me for someone else... If he had had the decency to cheat on me, or if he had thought that I was cheating on him... anything... that my laughter put him off, or that he didn't find me attractive anymore, or young enough or... Anything! But a reason! Any! *[pause]* But nothing. One night, he simply didn't come back... nor the other, or the following one...

[The FOREIGNER, feeling awkward, doesn't make up his mind about sitting and ends up standing following the circles drawn by the SISTER with his eyes]

SISTER I waited for him. The first night, I waited silently until the sun came up. But he didn't come. Sitting in the kitchen, in front of the fire place, I waited night after night... at the beginning, jumping excitedly with every little sound, hoping for it to be him: every crackling of the burning wooden, every crunching of the empty house, every unexpected shaking of my body... little by little, though, after the days went by and he didn't return, hope began

to fade... abandoned in some inhospitable corner of the attic, I lost it... completely *[stops, looks at the FOREIGNER]* and when you lose hope, you lose everything... *[proceeds her directionless walking]* I didn't want to admit it, but that was the case... as soon as I lost the faith in his return, I also lost the strength to leave the kitchen chair. Like a heavy burden that kept me pressed against the floor, his absence nailed me to that chair, to that kitchen, the last place where I saw him, the last token of his existence... sitting in that kitchen I waited for him just like my mum had been doing all her life with my sister... but he never came back. Not that night, nor ever... *[Stops. Suddenly she realizes where she is. Walks to the bench, picks up her bags nervously]* I... oh... I'm sorry... I didn't mean to bore you with my problems... please forgive me... we all have problems... there's nothing more boring than listening to other people's problems... sorry... I... I gotta go... bye... *[and leaves from the right side of the stage without giving the FOREIGNER the chance to say anything]*

[The FOREIGNER remains alone on the stage and, slowly, walks most of the circles walked by the SISTER repeating, in a low voice, some of the sentences she had said]

FOREIGNER "Didn't come back"... "the empty house"... "hope began to fade"... "when you lose hope, you lose everything"... "Like a heavy burden"... "nailed me to that chair"... "that kitchen" *[Stops right in the middle of the stage]* "never came back"... "Not that night, nor ever."

[Silence]

[The BROTHER and the SISTER come in together from the right side of the stage. They walk next to each other in silence]

BROTHER *[To the FOREIGNER]* Still waiting?

FOREIGNER Yes...

BROTHER Hey, let me introduce you my sister...

SISTER *[Ashamed]* We... we already know each other...

BROTHER Wow! You're good! You spend one afternoon in this god forsaken town and you already have a lover!

SISTER It's not that!

BROTHER Don't worry, sis. *[Ironical]* Nothing to be ashamed of: you can do whatever you want to... you've got my blessing...

SISTER Just leave it, OK!

BROTHER *[To the FOREIGNER]* But listen...

[The FOREIGNER looks for the first time towards them]

BROTHER If you are not waiting for anybody... what are you doing in this shithole?

FOREIGNER Nothing. I'm just passing by.

BROTHER Yes, so you told me... and I'm not surprised: there's nothing to do here!

SISTER *[Daring to look almost directly at the FOREIGNER]* And where are you heading to?

FOREIGNER North.

SISTER To find a job?

BROTHER *[Interrupting the FOREIGNER]* He won't find anything! There are no jobs anywhere. You need to go far away. Further. Wherever! But as far as possible... *[pause]* and never come back...

SISTER Are you going to the north to get a job?

FOREIGNER No... I'm looking for... *[hesitates. Looks around awkwardly]* I'm looking for a person...

BROTHER And there he is again! I already told him that we are all looking for someone! It's the only thing worth looking for nowadays!

SISTER Please don't. You know I don't like when you talk like that.

BROTHER But it's the truth! Would you rather have me lying to you? Is that it? Do you want me to say that we are having a

hell of a life? That we are so bloody happy? That nobody is alone? *[pause]* Do you want me to lie to you?

SISTER *[Glimpsing slightly towards the FOREIGNER]* Yes... I do...

BROTHER Then I'm sorry... but I can't. I can't pretend nothing's going on. I just can't... I can't... *[sadly]* I can't... I can't I can't I can't! I've tried it! I've bloody tried it so many times! So desperately... I swear! But I just can't... I can't... I can't...

SISTER *[Merciful]* I know...

[Silence]

SISTER *[Getting as closer as possible to the BROTHER but without touching him]* I know... I know...

[The FOREIGNER stays still, only a couple of steps away from the siblings, looking at them]

SISTER *[Moving slightly away from the BROTHER. To the FOREIGNER]* And who is it?

FOREIGNER What?

SISTER Who is this person that you are looking for?

FOREIGNER *[Doubts for a second]* Don't know... I... I don't know her...

SISTER But then... why are you looking for her?

BROTHER *[Little by little feeling more calmed]* Why is he looking for her? Is that your question? "Why are you looking for her?" That doesn't matter! What really matters is how will he know that he has already found her if he doesn't know who she is!

SISTER It may matter to you... but to me...

FOREIGNER When I find her, I'll know. I have no doubt about it.

BROTHER But how?

FOREIGNER Because I will never feel alone again...

SISTER Never feel alone...

BROTHER That's impossible! Even though you managed to find this person you are looking for, you'd still be alone... we all are...

SISTER You're not alone...

BROTHER *[Surprised]* Am I not?

SISTER No! You've got me!

BROTHER Such big deal! A sister that only comes visiting once in a blue moon...

SISTER You could also come and visit me...

BROTHER I'm extremely busy, you know that...

SISTER Then, don't complain about me not visiting you more often! *[remembering the FOREIGNER is nearby]* Sorry... families...

FOREIGNER Yes... families...

BROTHER We all got one...

SISTER But how do you know that this person you're looking for will be in the north?

FOREIGNER I don't know it...

SISTER Then... why do you go there?

FOREIGNER To go somewhere... I was going crazy at home. All day long locked in the kitchen... loneliness was eating me from inside...

BROTHER Loneliness is our cancer... sometimes it gives us little periods of truce, instants of calm in which we believe that we have overcome it, but then it hits us again even harder...

FOREIGNER Exactly...

SISTER Exactly...

[Silence]

SISTER Do you... do you want to prolong this truce a little longer having a beer?

FOREIGNER No... thank you... my train is about to arrive...

BROTHER You can take the next one.

SISTER *[Hopeful]* Yes! The next one!

FOREIGNER I'm sorry... I... I want to catch this one... thanks for... for the truce... but the pain came back a while ago and... I must take this train... *[starts walking slowly towards the right part of the stage]*

[The BROTHER and the SISTER stay still looking at the FOREIGNER who doesn't leave the stage]

BROTHER Do you... do you want to go for a beer...

SISTER The two of us?

BROTHER Yes...

SISTER Ummph... yes... Oh... no... no... I'm sorry... actually I'm in a bit of a hurry... I have loads to do still and...

BROTHER Oh, OK...

SISTER I'm sorry but I forgot that...

BROTHER Hey, no worries, honestly... actually..., now that I think about it, I'm also quite tight on time because we are pretty busy at work and... *[steps forward to hug the SISTER but stops awkwardly and pats her on the back instead]* Well, I better go... see you tomorrow?

SISTER Yes...

BROTHER Drive safely...

SISTER I will... bye... *[and leaves to the left forgetting her grocery bags on the stage]*

[The BROTHER stays alone staring at the SISTER leaving through the opposite side where the FOREIGNER is]

BROTHER *[Facing the audience. Sad]* It's been great to see you...

Curtain

Scene Two

The following day. Early morning.
A similar space. Some chairs, or a bench on which the characters can sit, more or less placed in the middle of the stage.
It's not raining anymore.

[The FOREIGNER is alone, standing in the centre of the stage carrying the SISTER's grocery bags]

[The BROTHER walks in in a rush, eyes fixed on the floor, and clashes against the FOREIGNER]

BROTHER *[Without looking at him or stopping]* Sorry...

FOREIGNER Don't worry...

BROTHER *[Hears a familiar voice and stops. Turns around. Looks at the FOREIGNER]* But... hey... what are you doing here? Weren't you supposed to catch a train yesterday?

FOREIGNER Yes...

BROTHER So?

FOREIGNER I... I missed it...

BROTHER *[Getting closer to the FOREIGNER]* You missed it?

FOREIGNER Yes...

BROTHER But... how come did you miss it if you were just next to the station?

FOREIGNER Well... *[pause]* actually... I... I didn't miss it...

BROTHER No?

FOREIGNER I... I let it go.

BROTHER Why?

FOREIGNER Don't know... I've spent the whole night up thinking about it and still haven't understood why I did it... I don't know why but somehow... I felt like... like I had to do it... that I didn't have to step onto that train...

BROTHER *[Cynical]* Like a premonition?

FOREIGNER No... at least I don't think so... don't believe in these things...

BROTHER No. Me neither... but because you said that... well... I thought that maybe...

FOREIGNER It was more like an immobilization. I was nailed to the ground. I saw the train approaching the station, I saw it stopping, its doors opening, some travellers getting out of it... the people on the platform getting into it... and I really wanted to get in myself! My wish, my will if you want, was to get into that train but... don't know why... I honestly can't explain it but my feet were glued to the ground and... no matter how hard I fought to set them free... I wasn't strong enough... really... I know it makes no sense... I know you won't believe me and you may think that I'm crazy... but I'm telling you I couldn't move... the doors of the train were wide open in front of me but I was unable to cross them... just like in that Buñuel film, d'you know? The one with the guests to a party who couldn't leave the room even though the doors were open ajar...

BROTHER I don't know... who did you say?

FOREIGNER It doesn't matter... the fact is that I tried to move, to get through those doors... but I couldn't get into the train and... suddenly... the beeping closing-doors noise... and I wanted to shout! Tell them to stop! Tell them not to depart, that I wasn't on the train yet! Beg them not to leave me there! *[pause]* I wanted to scream... but I couldn't find my voice. I opened my mouth like a fish out of the water desperately searching for air, but I didn't produce a sound. I wanted to tell them to wait *[pause]* but the doors closed and the train began to move... slowly... painfully... it moved and went by in front of me *[pause]* slowly, scorning me... *[pause]* when the tail of the train had disappeared completely, a grave, whipping scream burnt my throat: "Wait!" I shouted... But it was already too late... I was alone on the platform... once again...

[Silence]

BROTHER But... why didn't you get the next train?

FOREIGNER The next train?

BROTHER Yes, the next one, 15 minutes later...

FOREIGNER Don't know... I... I didn't think about it... or I did... don't remember... I wasn't thinking straight... I only wanted to run away from that platform... you should've seen it... the platform was so sad and lonely after everybody had left... I had to... I ran through the streets of this unfamiliar town unable to do anything else and... and I ended up here... in this park... or whatever this is...

BROTHER And what would you do now?

FOREIGNER Don't know... I'm tired... I need to rest for a while... maybe sleep... I'll think about it later on...

BROTHER Oh... I'd tell you to crash on my sofa for a while, but I gotta go... I'm already late for a meeting...

FOREIGNER Don't worry... it's OK... I'll be fine... thanks... really, but I don't want to keep you any longer...

BROTHER OK, then... take care, right?

[The FOREIGNER stays in the same spot]

FOREIGNER *[Leaves the bags on the floor]* Could you tell me the time?

BROTHER The time?

[Silence]

BROTHER Are you in a hurry as well?

FOREIGNER No... not at all... *[seeing the BROTHER's surprised face]* I like... I like to know the time... so I don't feel so lost... it's like my anchor, you know? Like the post that sticks me to the ground... to... to life...

BROTHER *[Going back to the side of the FOREIGNER]* And do you love life so much?

FOREIGNER Love? Don't know... I don't think so but I haven't experienced anything else...

BROTHER *[Sits down. Sad]* No... me neither... and that's what I'm complaining about... since the moment we are born, they push this idea of living a life into us, of earning a living and seizing the time, you know? All that bloody carpe diem stuff! But no one tells us what to do when we can't live life any longer... no one offers us an alternative to... to life...

FOREIGNER *[Sits next to the BROTHER]* Maybe... maybe there isn't any...

BROTHER I'm afraid you're right. Maybe that's the only alternative: non-existence. The non-existence of the self, but also the non-existence of the emptiness, of the pain, of the loneliness... *[pause. With moderate enthusiasm]* Can you imagine it? To wake up in the morning without feeling this emptiness in your guts... To have breakfast without the choking anguish of the empty table... to get out on the street without the sadness of the solitary person and arriving at the park, or your job, or a theatre, or a bar... and not having to stare with envy those who are not alone... can you imagine what that must feel like?

FOREIGNER No. I don't want to imagine it. It hurts me too much to know that it's not true.

[Silence]

BROTHER And yet you keep dreaming about us. I don't blame you. We all do. Yes... Sometimes... when I'm driving... I tailgate the car in front of me just to see the eyes of the driver reflected on the rear-view mirror... and if those eyes seem kind, even friendly, I imagine what I could tell to them... how we could stop our cars in a service area and share a coffee. Nothing else. Just a plain bad coffee. Share a brief while. Maybe not even talking. Only being together... for a second... just that... until the heavy weight on my stomach ceased to oppress my heart... one moment together... you know? Until I began to think, again, about the possibility of being happy... *[pause]* Couldn't we believe just for a second, that there is a real chance for happiness? That we are not alone anymore, that the torture has finished, our punishment has been pardoned and we have someone by our side? Tell me? Couldn't we dream about it even for a little while? To get rid of this bloody mist that chases us! To feel, even though in dreams, some happiness! Tell me! Couldn't we do that?

FOREIGNER *[Quiet. Doubts. Then, with resignation]* No... loneliness is our life sentence and we can't escape it... not even in dreams...

BROTHER I... I didn't know that loneliness drove you that crazy... I thought... I thought that the company of the workmates, the occasional greetings from the neighbours, the shallow conversations in the bar... would be enough. I thought... that I didn't need nobody else and yet... no matter how many hours I spend on the office, how many evenings I waste on the bar... at the end of the day, I have to return to my empty flat, to my reality, to my perturbing loneliness...

FOREIGNER Exactly. At the end of the day, when everybody goes to sleep, is when you feel the most lonely... maybe it's because, unwillingly, you end up making a balance of your day and you re-discover yourself abandoned...

BROTHER And sometimes there's not even a need for a balance... *[pause]* It's the silence. The silence that spreads all over

the house kills me. A thick, black silence that no sound, no TV or radio at full blast, can make disappear. The silence of the lonesome one that screams right into your ears...

- FOREIGNER** *[Understanding what the BROTHER says]* The silence...
- BROTHER** The silence of the empty sofa, of the sad kitchen, the dark room, the cold bed...
- FOREIGNER** The silence...
- BROTHER** The silence of the absent one, of the person who isn't by our side... the silence...
- FOREIGNER** The silence...

[Silence. Long]

- BROTHER** But no! No! *[Stands up and moves violently like shaking some kind of ghost out of his body]* We cannot give up! We must keep on living! It's the only thing we can do... live... live...
- FOREIGNER** And die...
- BROTHER** Yes. But not yet. Now we must live. Alone... but alive... we have no other choice... d'you hear me? We must live!
- FOREIGNER** I can't... I haven't slept for so many nights now...
- BROTHER** You have no other choice...

[Silence]

- FOREIGNER** They say that there are still some places where we can find each other... people, I mean...
- BROTHER** Yes. That's it. Don't give up yet...
- FOREIGNER** ... public places where we can share our life...
- BROTHER** Don't think so... *[Sits down]* Where?
- FOREIGNER** Train stations, for example...

BROTHER *[Not surprised]* I had a friend who liked to go to the train stations... he said... he said something quite similar... that train stations were one of the few places where human relations were real... that the goodbye hugs to the beloved ones, the kisses and the good wishes, were real... that the happiness for the arrival of those we were waiting for didn't conceal anything... as if... as if the combination of the nervousness of the trip, the waiting, the romantic past of the trains... everything put together... allied to destroy the bloody shell that we carry on top of us every day... as if... there... finally... we could be us... just us... without lies or cheating or anything else...

FOREIGNER And does your friend still go there? To the train stations, I mean...

BROTHER No... one day the surprise, the fascination for the true human relations turned into envy and, little by little, hate: amongst all those hugs, laughter, greetings and happy words, he was alone... silent... abandoned...

FOREIGNER Like me...

BROTHER Like everybody...

FOREIGNER Like everybody...

[Silence]

BROTHER *[Awkward]* Besides... You've already seen our station... you wouldn't say that's a place for this human beings' communion, would you?

FOREIGNER No... no... But I totally understand your friend... I also thought for a while that in the stations I could find some moments of happiness... but, instead, I only found the cries and the sadness of those leaving and the devastation and abandonment of those left behind.

BROTHER Maybe you should've gone to an airport.

FOREIGNER An airport?

BROTHER Yes, the division of feelings is much clearer in an airport: on the departing area, the sadness of the farewells; on the arrival area, the happiness of the reunions.

FOREIGNER Maybe you're right... I never thought about it... well, actually I never thought much about the stations thing, either... I mean that one day I just happened to be in one for whatever reason and I guess that I saw the chance to see some human relations... real ones, I mean.

BROTHER Just like my friend.

FOREIGNER Yes. Those kind of relations that prove that we are still human. With all our flaws and our few qualities. Relations that shake us, thrill us and make us cry like babies forgetting for a while the masks imposed onto us by the culture...

BROTHER My friend calls them "shells"...

FOREIGNER I thought that I could see the human being in its purity *[sad]* and that it would also see me... *[pause]* but it didn't happen...

BROTHER Things never happen the way we wish them to happen...

FOREIGNER Never...

[Silence]

BROTHER And that's why you're here...

FOREIGNER What?

BROTHER Because there are no airports around... you come searching the human touch in the park...

FOREIGNER Maybe...

BROTHER *[Cynical]* Have you found it yet?

FOREIGNER I found you.

BROTHER You know I don't count... I'm nobody... I'm only passing by...

FOREIGNER But in the meantime...

BROTHER In the meantime nothing! *[stands up and moves nervously]* I'm not here! Don't waste your time with me! You should know better than that...

[Silence]

[The FOREIGNER looks at the BROTHER hoping to see some crack in his feelings that doesn't take place]

FOREIGNER Sorry. I didn't mean to... I just don't know what is real anymore...

BROTHER Maybe there's nothing real.

FOREIGNER Maybe.

BROTHER Not even this bloody park! Why are we in a park? I don't like parks... they bring me too many memories... and none of them good ones... Why are we here?

FOREIGNER So I don't forget.

BROTHER But...

FOREIGNER *[Interrupting him. Begging]* Let's not talk about it anymore, please...

BROTHER OK, I'm sorry...

[Silence]

FOREIGNER How long have you been alone?

BROTHER *[Looking at him for a second, surprised about the question]* Alone?

FOREIGNER Yes... how long has it been?

BROTHER I don't know... a long time... years...

FOREIGNER Yes... and how do you manage to cope with it?

BROTHER *[Sits down with his back to the FOREIGNER]* Don't know... I guess you get used to it... I haven't thought about it... at the beginning you are more aware of it, of your loneliness, I mean, of the fact that there's no one by

your side, that you're alone, abandoned and that probably you'll always be because no one wants you, they've erased you from their lives... not only from their daily routines but also from their memories: they've forgotten you. And that hurts. That really hurts. *[Pause]* At the beginning I couldn't sleep... I... I lie in bed, closed my eyes tight, wishing to sleep, to kill another day hoping for a better morning... but I couldn't sleep. *[Pause]* I choked. Physically, I mean. My loneliness choked me and I couldn't breath. And I coughed. And coughed and coughed and I thought I was gonna die right there and I sat up and opened my eyes, and went to the kitchen and I drank a glass of wine and... and I cried. Yes. I cried because I knew no one would come to take care of me. No one would come to sooth me. To dry my eyes... I was alone and I would always be... I could die in that kitchen and nobody would notice, nobody would care...

FOREIGER What about your sister?

BROTHER My sister? She has too many problems of her own to care about mine...

FOREIGNER Yes, but still, she would...

BROTHER No. She wouldn't... *[pause]* Or she would... I don't know... is just that the kitchen at night is extremely sad... it feels like the bloody end of the world... it's empty, the upsetting metallic clicking of the fluorescent bulb pierces your brains... the annoying grunting of the fridge, the freezing coldness of the wall tiles... when you are alone, all of them become cruel, wild, aggressive. The neighbour's lights that you can see through the badly closed blinds mock you reminding you that out of those four walls of yours there is a whole world full of people who are also alone and desperate and who also run into the kitchen in the middle of the night to gain their breath back and end up opening a bottle of wine and drinking it all up before the sun is out because there's nothing else to do *[pause]* because life hurts them too much, because the world suffocates them, because they need to switch off that pain, because they're alone and abandoned and empty and they need to escape from their lives...

[Silence]

FOREIGNER But... but you said that you get used to it, didn't you?

BROTHER *[Surprised about the question. Visibly defeated]* What?

FOREIGNER *[In a begging tone of voice]* You said you get used to it...

BROTHER Get used to it?

FOREIGNER Yes.

BROTHER *[Pause. Serious]* No. Never.

FOREIGNER But, then... how can you live?

BROTHER Because it's easier to live than to die... only for that reason... we're not even free to die, you know? They want us alive. A dead person can't buy anything! *[pause]* my granny... my granny had to die up to three times before finally dying... that's how stubborn life is...

[The FOREIGNER looks at the BROTHER with surprise and interest]

BROTHER The first time, her heart simply stopped working and she didn't breath anymore. I remember my mother cried a lot. Of course she already was an old woman, my granny, I mean, and her time had come, but still, a mother is always a mother... she was dead for two minutes. Clinically dead, I mean... until the doctors got her back to life connecting an awful load of tubes and machines to her body... she didn't even realize that had been dead for a while... and when my mother, crying still, now tears of joy, of course, tried to explain it to her, she didn't want to believe her.

FOREIGNER Maybe death disappointed her...

BROTHER What?

FOREIGNER Maybe she was expecting something else, some kind of other life, or an explanation to all this suffering once you're dead and she didn't find anything like that... that's why she didn't want to acknowledge that she had died, because it would've meant to accept that life just finishes...

[Silence]

[The BROTHER looks at the FOREIGNER who is looking at nowhere in particular]

BROTHER The second time she died it was at night time, when there was only me in the bedroom. My mother had gone to rest for a while and I was taking care of her in that sordid hospital bedroom... it was three or four in the morning when, suddenly, I woke up shaking. I couldn't say why, but I woke up for some reason... I think... I think it was the extreme silence of the room. The silence of my granny's dead body... *[pause]* I got next to her... I put my ear on her tiny chest and I saw that her heart wasn't beating. I froze. My granny was dead and I didn't know what to do... I didn't know how to react in front of a corpse... still don't know... but then it was even worse... I was younger and that body was my granny's... and I couldn't stop thinking about my mother's reaction... I was sure she was gonna get mad at me, that she would blame me... that my duty was to take care of my granny and instead... I had let her die... I know it's silly... but back then... I really thought it was my fault...

FOREIGNER But granny didn't die...

BROTHER No. Just like she had stopped breathing, she breathed again proffering a slight whispering sound, like a calmed breeze that took her back to life... *[pause]* I decided not to tell anyone... it was the first dead I put on my back... now I don't count them anymore! *[pause]* The next time, the third one for me, the second one for the rest, was the worst one. My granny's previous two deaths had been peaceful, relaxed... that next one, on the other hand... it was an agony from beginning to end: with dry coughing, pain, choking, screams, anguish, hallucinations, tears... hour after hour of torment that the whole family endured powerless not knowing what to do or what to say... *[pause]* after one night of screams, she died at eight o'clock in the morning leaving behind a face deformed by the pain. Nobody said anything but the general feeling was of relief... of having been through a really bad experience that it was finally over... we didn't dare to admit it, but that was that. She was free at last. And so were we... *[pause]* when the doctors brought her back to life... my mother almost cursed them but she bit her lips and said nothing. My granny was not so politically correct. That time there was no need for us to tell her that she had been dead for a while, she knew it very well and, cursing the bloody doctors who resurrected her, she told them that she would never

forgive them for what they had done to her... that after the horrible ordeal she had gone through in order to die... getting her back to life was such a bad joke...

[Silence]

[The FOREIGNER stares at the BROTHER]

Curtain

Scene Three

The following day.
Morning.
The same undefined space of the previous acts.
The sun shines.
No grocery bags on the stage.

[The BROTHER and the SISTER are sitting in the bench quite far away from each other]

[The FOREIGNER is on the far end of the stage. Amidst the dark]

[The BROTHER and the SISTER don't know the FOREIGNER is there]

SISTER *[Slightly sad and not looking at the BROTHER]* He phoned today...

BROTHER Who?

SISTER Who do you think? HIM!

BROTHER Oh, yes, sure... and what did he say?

SISTER The same... he wanted to tell me he was sorry, that he knew he hurt me really bad, that he wanted my forgiveness... that he needs me... he needs me! Bollocks! He needs me... *[Pause. She collapses emotionally]* He needs me... I DO need him! I'm the one who's been abandoned! I'm the one being disposed off like a bloody tissue! I'm the one left because I was no longer needed! And now he tells me that HE needs ME? He needs me to pay his rent! That's it! Cause I know that he's out of job again and that he spends the day in the bar... bloody good for nothing... only for getting drunk and shouting at me... and now he says that he needs me! How does he dare? He was the one who left me! He decided that he didn't need me any longer! And now he just comes around with this needing me bullshit?

[Silence]

BROTHER We all need someone...

SISTER Then why do we kick them out of our side when we have them?

BROTHER Because... *[hesitates, he doesn't dare saying it]*

SISTER Because what?

BROTHER Because we're incapable of keeping hold of happiness...

SISTER Probably... and even if we manage to steal some bits of happiness, they take them from us... Have you heard they want to demolish the river park?

BROTHER *[Without much interest]* Could be... I don't know... I haven't been there for a long time...

SISTER I'm sad they want to get rid of the park...

BROTHER Sad? Why? When was the last time you were there?

SISTER Long time ago, I know... but they shouldn't demolish it... it's... it's part of our past...

BROTHER And they shouldn't demolish it because of that? Don't be so nostalgic!

SISTER It's not nostalgia it's... it's sadness... It's sad to see how everything falls apart...

BROTHER What's falling apart?

SISTER Everything. The park... the memories... our childhood...

BROTHER Our childhood?

SISTER Yes! Don't you see that? Don't you see that everything is disappearing? Every time mum asks you who you are, don't you see how a piece of our past vanishes? With every new memory lost, don't you see how our past fades away?

[Awkward silence]

SISTER We cannot let it happen... we must remember... even though it hurts... we must remember... that's why we are here... even though it hurts, we must relive the past... *[pause]* we... we were walking in the river park that day...

[Silence]

[The BROTHER avoids her eyes]

SISTER We were coming back from school and because it was such a nice afternoon... I told you to go through the park *[pause]* you were in a hurry... you said you wanted to get home soon... *[pause]* but I insisted... it was such a lovely day... that week had been raining almost every day... I was sick of all that greyness and sadness and water... that's why when I saw that glorious sunny afternoon... I wanted to make the most of it... as if it were the last time I was going to see it... *[pause]* you didn't want to... but you always ended up doing what I told you... and you still do...

BROTHER *[Thinking about it]* I still do...

SISTER We finished school at five o'clock. We walked for a while with... with... what you called them? Wow! I've

forgotten! What were their names? Can you remember them?

BROTHER No. I don't want to remember anything.

SISTER What a drag... how can we forget people so easily?
[pause] Do you think the other people also forget about us so easily?

BROTHER To forget about us first they should've thought about us at one point and I can assure you that no one thinks about us or cares about us or... *[but stops talking feeling really sad]*

[Silence]

SISTER *[Looking at the BROTHER concerned]* What's happening to you lately? You are kind of down all the time...

BROTHER Don't know... I'm not too cheery but... no... nothing has happened... it's just that... I've lost energy... like I'm running out of petrol...

SISTER Can I help you?

BROTHER Yes... *[then sadder]* No. You can't do anything about it... Nobody can...

[Silence]

[The SISTER doesn't know what to do and just looks sadly at the BROTHER]

BROTHER *[Awkward, trying to change the topic of conversation]* But carry on... you were telling me about that day in the park...

SISTER No need. You already know what happened.

BROTHER Yes. That I will never be able to forget. It was the last time we saw her...

SISTER The beginning of the end...

BROTHER The first night any of us spent in the kitchen...

[Silence]

BROTHER *[Standing]* I... I think I better get going...

SISTER *[Without moving]* Yes...

BROTHER See you on Friday...

SISTER Yes... till Friday...

[The BROTHER begins to walk]

SISTER Wait!

[The BROTHER stops]

SISTER I'll walk with you to your work...

BROTHER Don't worry, it's OK...

SISTER No, really, I want to... plus it will do me good to walk a little... lately I don't walk at all...

BROTHER Lately? When have you ever walked?

SISTER *[Seriously]* When I couldn't stay any longer in the house.
[She stands up] I'll go with you.

BROTHER *[Stopping her]* No... it's OK... really... I rather go on my own... bye... *[and leaves]*

[The SISTER stays for a while looking at his BROTHER leaving and then goes back to the bench but sees the FOREIGNER]

SISTER *[Still standing and waving at him]* Hey! Hi!

[The FOREIGNER walks toward her discretely]

SISTER You just missed my brother...

FOREIGNER Yes... I've seen him leaving...

SISTER *[Surprised]* How long have you been here for?

FOREIGNER A while...

SISTER And why didn't you say anything?

FOREIGNER I didn't want to pry...

SISTER *[Sits down tired]* My brother told me you missed your train...

FOREIGNER Yes...

SISTER Did you miss it for me?

FOREIGNER What?

SISTER Do you want to sit with me?

FOREIGNER Yes...

SISTER And what will you do now?

FOREIGNER Don't know... stay here for a while... but I'm starting to dislike this park... there is... there is too many people... too many people next to other people... displaying their happiness for me to feel comfortable here...

SISTER Ignore them...

FOREIGNER I can't: I look at them and I compare myself with them and I find myself even lonelier... more lost... emptier... *[pause]* I look around me and I envy them with a gangrenous envy that eats my skin and destroys my insides... they are not alone and I, next to them, am much lonelier...

SISTER And where will you go?

FOREIGNER Don't know... have nowhere to go... don't wanna go anywhere in particular... not anymore...

SISTER And the person you were looking for?

FOREIGNER I think it doesn't exist... I had dreamt her... don't know... I only know one thing for sure: I will never find her...

SISTER But...

FOREIGNER No. I won't find her because, in fact, I think that I had already found her and I let her go...

SISTER You can find someone else...

FOREIGNER No. It's too late...

[Long silence]

[The SISTER stares at the FOREIGNER awkwardly]

SISTER Well... in that case... I think.... *[she stands up]* it's been great seeing you again but... but... I gotta go... I... *[but she doesn't know what else to say so she just starts walking away]*

FOREIGNER *[Stands up]* Could you...

[The SISTER stops]

FOREIGNER *[Begging]* Could you... stay with me a bit longer?

SISTER What?

FOREIGNER Would you mind? Staying... just another minute...

[The SISTER hesitates for a second but walks back to the FOREIGNER]

FOREIGNER Thanks...

[Silence]

[The SISTER looks at the FOREIGNER for a while but, seeing that he does nothing, she looks around her checking that no one can see them and, discretely, delicately, she holds the FOREIGNER's hand with hers]

[The FOREIGNER lowers his head a little bit to look at the holding hands and reply to the SISTER's action by softly caressing her thumb with his]

[They stay like that for a long time: holding hands in silence until]

SISTER *[Removing her hand shyly all of the sudden]* Sorry... now I really must go... *[walking away. Nervously]* sorry... but it's getting late and... now... I... take care...

[The FOREIGNER looks at her walking away and keeps his eyes fixed on the spot through which she leaves long time after she is gone]

FOREIGNER *[In a low, soft voice]* Come back...

[Silence]

SISTER *[Walking in again. Awkward]* Damn! I don't like parks either... they bring me too many memories... *[she stops in front of the FOREIGNER]*

FOREIGNER *[Ignoring the repetition of the BROTHER's sentence by the SISTER]* As the years go by, memories acquire an independent reality and live beyond the spots where they were generated...

SISTER Maybe that's true, but if you're so unlucky to come back to the original spot... these memories are even more painful...

FOREIGNER There's people who believe that memory is selective... we only remember the good things and forget whatever hurts us...

SISTER There's also people who believe life is wonderful...

[Silence]

SISTER Loonies.

FOREIGNER Loonies...

[Pause]

[They both sit down]

SISTER Do you think... *[hesitates]* do you think there's someone else living this moment? *[seeing the FOREIGNER's surprised face]* I mean this situation... two strangers sitting in a bench talking about all and nothing at the same time, worried about not hurting each other with their memories...

FOREIGNER Do you mean... like in a parallel universe?

SISTER No. No. I mean in this world... even in another park of this bloody town... people finding themselves in a similar situation... that their conversation leads them to similar conclusions...

FOREIGNER Don't know... maybe... why not?

SISTER Exactly. Why not? Why not? I like to think that it's true, that there's someone else who's feeling the same that I feel, living a life like mine... *[pause]* imagining this person, picturing a face and a voice... makes me feel less lonely...

FOREIGNER But... what if this person doesn't exist?

SISTER It must exist.

FOREIGNER But...

SISTER *[Stands up. Extremely nervous]* No "buts"! It exists!

FOREIGNER *[Sad, in a low voice, talking mostly to himself]* I wish it was true... but I know they don't exist...there's nobody...

SISTER Then I'm leaving...

FOREIGNER Your brother will be here soon...

SISTER What did you say?

FOREIGNER Your brother... he will come soon... maybe you want to wait for him...

SISTER *[Doubts. Checks her watch]* But he just left for work... *[but seeing the FOREIGNER's confident face she sits down again]* Alright... I'll wait for him... if you don't mind...

FOREIGNER I don't mind... I'm asking you please to stay... *[Pause]* when this time of the day arrives is when I feel the loneliest... the evenings are the worst...

SISTER *[Looking around, making sure that it stills morning, that the sun is still shining]* But it's still morning...

FOREIGNER ...when another day is finishing and, once again, I rediscover myself as lonely as the previous day...

SISTER You're not alone today...

[The BROTHER comes in from the right side]

[Neither the SISTER, nor the FOREIGNER see him]

[The BROTHER walks towards the FOREIGNER and the SISTER silently in order to listen to their conversation]

FOREIGNER Yes I am... you're nothing but a mirage, we both now that. Sooner or later you'll disappear and I'll return to my reality of loneliness.

SISTER But that hasn't happened yet... why do you worry about the future?

FOREIGNER Because I refuse to accept that there's only this bloody present.

SISTER There are truths that go beyond our acceptance or negation of them...

FOREIGNER *[Sad]* I know... but I've got the right to dream...

BROTHER *[Quiet next to the bench]* Everyday less and less...

SISTER *[Cynical]* Hard working day?

BROTHER *[Following her thread]* Like always...

SISTER But it's over for today...

BROTHER But tomorrow I'll be back...

SISTER Just because you want to...

BROTHER Because I need to get out of the house...

[Silence]

[The BROTHER sits on the bench, between the SISTER and the FOREIGNER]

SISTER How long have you been out of work?

**BROTHER and
FOREIGNER**

Two months and a half.

SISTER

And why didn't you tell me?

BROTHER

Because... *[pause]* don't know... doesn't matter... really... and you two... what are you two doing here? *[to the FOREIGNER]* I'm beginning to think that you don't leave this town because of my sister...

SISTER

Don't be silly!

BROTHER

Don't be angry... there's nothing wrong with that... everybody is looking for someone...

FOREIGNER

[Absent-minded] Once I had someone... someone next to me... someone to have breakfast with and to have dinner at the in-laws...

SISTER

You told me you'd never had anyone by your side?

[The BROTHER looks at the SISTER surprised]

FOREIGNER

I meant someone who loved me back...

[Silence]

SISTER

I'm sorry... please, continue...

FOREIGNER

Her name was... well... her name doesn't matter, it could've been any other name and everything would've been the same... names are just random tags that we put to each others... *[pause]* she and I met at work. I've never been adventurous when it comes to love, I've never gone hunting in the nightclubs... I think that I'm too aware of my failure as a male specimen and I've always admitted defeat from the beginning... but you know... at work... you get in contact with all sorts of people... men and women... and it must be some kind of equation, a result of the needs of the moment but, sometimes, people so unsuccessful like me can also be attractive to the others... she chased me for two weeks... two weeks! Don't think that I was playing hard to get or anything... it was more that I wasn't aware of her intentions... I had never been in a similar situation... how would I've thought that those stupid smiles, those

staring looks, those silly conversations, were all part of her seduction plan? *[Pause]* I don't remember very well how I found out about it... I guess somebody told me... don't know... the thing is that I fell in her trap. And what a trap! I had never felt so lonely as when I was with her... It took me a year and a half to find my way out of it! In the meantime, though, I took all the steps that everyone else around me was taking: we bought a flat, we moved together, we considered having a child... luckily, the quality of my sperm is not so good and we didn't achieve our... her! goal... *[pause]* and yet sometimes I think that a child would've made me feel less alone... I mean, it would've meant having someone next to me, right?

BROTHER Not always... I left home as soon as I turned 18 with a sound bang of the door, cursing everybody and promising they would never hear about me again...

SISTER And four months later you were back home.

BROTHER And do you think it was my call? D'you think I wasn't angry with myself for returning home like that? Defeated...

SISTER No. I know. You didn't want to come back... I was just kidding...

BROTHER It's not funny.

SISTER Come on, don't be upset... that was a long time ago... besides... now we weren't talking about that... *[to the FOREIGNER]* you were explaining us what happened with your partner...

FOREIGNER Nothing. That's what happened. For a while we played the role of a happy couple until she left. Just when I was more used to her, to not sleeping alone, to always have someone at home... when I was beginning to believe that I was, finally, overcoming my loneliness... she left. *[Pause]* Just like that. Without a single word. She picked her stuff up, got into a taxi and disappeared...

[Silence]

FOREIGNER I waited for her... sitting in the kitchen... night after night... but she never came back...

SISTER Never came back...

FOREIGNER Didn't come back... sitting in the kitchen, in front of the fire place, I waited night after night...

SISTER Not that night, nor ever...

FOREIGNER Little by little hope began to fade...

FOREIGNER and SISTER And when you lose hope, you lose everything... I lost the strength to leave the kitchen chair... I am nailed to that chair... to that kitchen...

[Silence]

BROTHER And that's why you're looking for her...

FOREIGNER Don't know... I guess so... I've been going from town to town for a while now... looking for her... and I'm tired of it... *[pause]* I'd like... I'd like to remain in one place... still... settle there and forget about this bloody grunting in my stomach... *[looking around]* find a place where I could finally stop and disappear... I've been looking for too long and I really cannot take it anymore... I can't! I need a truce... some sort of sign that tells me that my search is still meaningful... whatever... don't know... some bloody god-sent sign, some sort of hope... whatever! *[pause]* but to stop this pain.

BROTHER *[Stands up naturally and keeps talking while he leaves the stage]* And do you think there's anything that can stop this pain? Are you really so naïf *[talking from out of the stage, his voice vanishing little by little]* to believe that some day, somewhere, you'll find the... *[his voice cannot be heard anymore]*

FOREIGNER *[Quiet. He listens attentively to the BROTHER's words that the audience can't hear anymore]* It's true... sometimes I feel the same... I see that this search of mine has been for nothing... that I'm doomed to suffer forever...

SISTER *[Who hasn't reacted to the BROTHER's departure either]* Don't say that! *[Stands up and begins to leave]* Don't lose your hope. You can't lose your hope. You've got no right. We have no right! We must... *[but her voice vanishes off the stage]*

FOREIGNER *[Like before, he listens to the SISTER's words that the audience can't hear] But... I don't know if I'm capable of... I've got no strength... [pause]*

[The BROTHER and the SISTER come in carrying a kitchen table, a bottle of wine almost empty and a glass full of wine. They place the table in front of the FOREIGNER and the bottle and the glass on top of it. They leave through the other side of the stage]

BROTHER *[While leaving] Me neither... no one has... sometimes I think that... [but his voice vanishes again]*

[The SISTER comes back in carrying the grocery bags and leaves them on the table. Then she leaves]

The lights fade out slowly until becoming a weak beam of light facing the FOREIGNER

FOREIGNER *[Listens attentively staring where the BROTHER was sat] You're right... nothing makes sense... There's nothing left... [pause] only this bottle of wine half empty and this lonely kitchen...*

A shaky single light is turned on on the back of the FOREIGNER

FOREIGNER *[Looking at the audience] Nothing else. Only me. Alone. Forever [drinks some wine]*

Curtain