

AN EXCERPT FROM NIHAD HASANOVIĆ'S PLAY "REALLY?"
[ZAISTA?]

FIRST SCENE

(In a park. Muz and Ćućana sit. Bored, they peer at the ground. Muz nervously shakes one leg. He whistles a ditty but can't find the last few notes.)

ĆUĆANA: Not like that. Listen to me. Don't you have an ear? I'll show you whistling.

(She whistles the melody. Silence. Muz, no longer whistling, is upset; he envies her, his cheeks have become red, he boils.)

MUZ: Save it. Who are you to show me how to whistle! *(He whistles for a moment and seems to be mocking her.)* What do you take me for? Think I'm a pinhead? That I skipped school? Sweetheart, I have a degree in scenic arts! I almost finished it... *(He strokes one side of his pencil moustache.)*

ĆUĆANA: There's no point getting angry over whistling... I didn't mean to... I just wanted to tell you...

MUZ: You're not allowed to want! Where's a guitar? I want a guitar so the master can show you how to jam! She's trying to... *(whistling those notes)*, she's trying to... *(whistling)*. She wants to teach me! I wasn't born yesterday!

ĆUĆANA: Compose yourself, Muz, please, you're sweating head to toe.

MUZ: My moustache itches.

ĆUCANA: What would have happened if I had sung - you would have broken me in two... for nothing...

MUZ: Sure I would, you think I wouldn't? When I say something, I make it come true! Come on, sing a song, I'll show you! You can't toy with me... Isn't that right? Isn't that right? (*He grabs the poor girl's arm and squeezes it.*)

ĆUCANA: Auuuuuuuch! (*She breaks free.*) You are abnormal!

MUZ: Sure I am! I'll show you my papers: S-C-H, schizophrenia!

ĆUCANA: Lies. You'd be in the madhouse if you were sick.

MUZ: Lying — me? I'm out of here, I'm going to pack my bags, I'm going to buy some tighty-whities and my direction — the madhouse. Actually, I don't have to go anywhere: we're already in a madhouse. I wish I had enough underwear. Do you have any tighty-whities?

ĆUCANA: You can't stop talking about tighty-whities: tighty-whities, tighty-whities, tighty-whities!

MUZ: My moustache is scratching me.

(*They have cooled off. They stare again at the ground.*)

ĆUCANA: Look, you grabbed me so hard, my brooch fell off, an edelweiss, there it is... (*She picks it off the ground, strokes it, pins it to her T-shirt.*) It's pricking me...

MUZ (*he starts, as though waking from a swoon*): Who's pricking you? I'm pricking you? So that's it? I'm bothering you? So we've crossed the line? I should be tossed on the junk heap? I'm like an old nag? Now you don't need me anymore, now I'm pricking — straight into your heart, aren't I? Isn't that it?

ĆUCANA: You're starting again, I wasn't thinking of you, I was thinking about this small brooch. What would have happened if I'd lost it?

MUZ: Ah! It's all right, it's O.K., sorry...

(*Silence. Muz begins to whistle, but only briefly.*)

MUZ (*almost crying*): I want my doobage, I want my lovely THC, I want some drugs! Where's my grass, where is my sweet, beautiful grass, that precious grass of mine? (*He kisses the air.*)

ĆUCANA (*absorbed in her thoughts*):

Shoo-be-doo-ba... You want me to fetch it for you? Uh-uh, I'm nobody's slave; if you think I'm going to serve you... Why the hell are you whimpering, are you a man or what?

MUZ: Sure, I'm a man, no doubt about it... Look at that ant! (*He points.*) That small ant is marching around and building her little house. Ant, answer me! Have you seen my marijuana - my little sister? 'Yes, I have, Muz, sure I have!' And where is it, my lovely little ant? 'Ask Ćucana.'

ĆUCANA: Lay it on me! Get off my back, Muz! You're such a bore! What is this grass you're talking about?

MUZ: You know, you know everything, but you're just pretending... The grass I planted by the river... I was growing them and coddling them and talking to every single stalk, I slept by their side when a strong wind blew... I was taking such gentle care of them, and then some sow: she came and pulled them all out.

ĆUCANA: Me, a sow? I pulled them out?

MUZ: No, it was me.

ĆUCANA: You're deluding yourself. It's true, I like to steal flowers, like my mother did and my mother's mother did, and even the mother of my mother's mother, but I didn't touch your nasty grass, that's where you've gone wrong, my dear. Besides, marijuana isn't a flower.

MUZ: It is, I bet it is.

ĆUCANA: It is to you.

(She hums a little song to cool off. Agbar comes running, happy, transported, he holds a lottery ticket in his hand.)

AGBAR: Hello, tramps! Who says the lottery's a hoax? Picked all seven, you apathetic masses! *(Full of happiness, he performs a kata.)* Hy-ha-hoo! I'm a ninja!

MUZ (*aside*): We wanted nobody but you, angel!

ĆUĆANA (*to Muz*): Excuse me, one more time?

AGBAR: I'm sick of being a poet, now I have thousands and thousands of marks on my hands, I'm a rich man: I'm ready for a limo, for hotels and an effortless marriage...the Kamasutra! I've bought a copy of the Kamasutra! Wise but a titch boring, an outdated handbook — crowded with lists: styles of coition, depths of vagina, types of seduction... Me and my fiancée will have our work cut out for us. (*He pretends to be sad.*) I can't believe it... No; no way...

(*Silence. Ćućana approaches him.*)

ĆUĆANA (*sympathizing with him*): What's wrong, Agbar! (*She encourages him.*) Congratulations! Bravo! There is no reason for sorrow.

AGBAR (*upbeat*): I can't believe it, I simply cannot believe that I will never be selling condoms again! I'll be discharging Džan, my only employee. Where will he find refuge, the poor guy?

MUZ: Let him crawl under a rock.

AGBAR (*orating*): "To go over a long road through willow and fog." Hey Džan, my old buddy, rubbers helped us feed ourselves, and now our partnership is torn in two! Everybody goes where he must. Life is sad. (*He howls like a dog.*)

ĆUĆANA: Let me see it.

AGBAR (*giving her the winning lottery ticket*): There you are.

MUZ: Oh hemp, my darling, why did you forsake me?

AGBAR (*regretting*): The more safe sex there was, the more bread in our hands, mine and yours, Džan. How contentedly we shoveled in that bread! We did some honest work, we knocked off the rival Chinese condoms that split at the slightest twitch, we aided the happiness of all human kind. A condom smelling of strawberries, we profited most from that one, didn't we, Džan? Cheap and so full of delight! (*He whinnies.*)

ĆUĆANA: Why are you whinnying? (*She gives back the ticket.*)

AGBAR: Horses are beautiful animals. Clever, too.

MUZ (*indifferently, to Agbar*): Congratulations, my friend, you are the king of kings. I must go. (*To Ćućana.*) You're coming with me. To check out the lies you uttered. (*He pulls her after him.*)

ĆUĆANA: Take your hands off me!

MUZ: And who gave you a water lily from Amsterdam? It was me, baby. (*He laughs in slimy way.*) Let's go, move.

AGBAR: What's the rush! Wait! I'll buy you lunch: soup, kabobs, peppers! What's with you all of the sudden? (*He tries to stop Muz by force, uncovers a part of his arm.*) When did you have your arm tattooed? You're too old for such stuff.

MUZ: Isn't it wonderful? An Apache!

AGBAR: I hate tattoos. Over time they blur.

(They look at each other, they keep silent.)

AGBAR: Let's go, straight to a restaurant, let's cheer up our stomachs, I also invited those two Kenyans we hunted up whores for...

MUZ: I can't, trust me I can't. I've lost my compadres, Ago, my sisters and brothers — I lost my delicate marijuana stalks.

AGBAR: Terrible! No problem, I'll pay for what you lost.

MUZ: You don't understand, Ago. These little stalks of marijuana, I love them like nothing else in the world. And love, you can't buy it. Where are you now, my brothers and sisters? Send a message to your brother!

(Ćucana trips and falls, stands up by herself — they don't care at all. She gets angry and goes out all alone, they do not see her leave.)

AGBAR: You stink.

MUZ: Talking to me?

AGBAR: You reek, buddy, you stink terribly. What do you have under your coat? A dead dog?

MUZ: Nothing dead, but I can't help it.

AGBAR (*sniffing*): What could it possibly be? Cabbage?

MUZ: Beans. But more onions than beans. Where did that skunk go? Too much. (*He goes out.*)

AGBAR: Oh Džan, Džan, now you are all alone... Forget any more good, extra-strong condoms, because we won't be working there. Our stall will be shut, and births will skyrocket! There won't be any more, Džan, of our extra-strong well-loved condoms, and love will not exist the way it's existed before. Love doesn't exist anymore. But I've got millions.

**Translated from the Bosnian by
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