

Spilled Dictators

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Dramatis Personae

Bernard Reykjavik-citizen of unidentified country

Inspector Grieg- a government inspector

Inspector Klaus- her associate

Location: An unidentified country

Time: A week after the death of that country's dictator

Playwright's Note:

The names of the Dead Dictator and country are not mentioned within the script. Instead, the names are replaced with sounds. In the script, whenever the Dead Dictator's name is mentioned, it is replaced by the honking of a bicycle horn and whenever the country's name is mentioned, it is replaced by a whistle. They are written in the script as *HORN* and *WHISTLE* respectively in the dialogue.

(LIGHTS UP on an interrogation room. BERNARD is sitting at a table, his hands manacled in front of him. He is looking down at the table. He has obviously been beaten and is a little bloody. There is a framed picture of the Dead Dictator across from him and an empty chair on the other side of the table. There is a trashcan in close proximity to the empty chair. There is also a horn and whistle set in front of this chair. INSPECTOR GRIEG enters, with a manila folder filled with papers and photographs tucked under her arm. She is also carrying an almost empty cup of ice cream and a plastic spoon. She is followed by INSPECTOR KLAUS who is also carrying a cup of ice cream and a spoon. GRIEG sets the cup of ice cream down and tosses the manila folder onto the table. KLAUS stands near the door, leans against the wall and eats his ice cream in silence. Both INSPECTORS are wearing black armbands.)

GRIEG

Bernard Reykjavik?

BERNARD

Y-yes?

GRIEG

I'm Inspector Grieg and this is my associate Inspector Klaus. Do you know why you're here?

BERNARD

No.

GRIEG

You don't know?

BERNARD

I don't, but...

(BERNARD stops)

GRIEG

...But? But what? Come on. Out with it.

BERNAD

I—I think you're mistaken. I'm *pretty sure*—you must be mistaken.

GRIEG

Mistaken? Ooh. Mistaken, he says. Mistaken about what?

BERNARD

I've done nothing wrong, Inspector. I think you got the wrong man.

GRIEG

We got the wrong man? You just said you don't know why you're here. How do you know we got the wrong man, Mr. Reykjavik, if you don't know why you're here?

BERNARD

Well I...I haven't done anything! Nothing illegal, anyway.

GRIEG

Oh?

BERNARD

I mean, if I *did* do anything illegal, I wasn't aware of it. I try to be a good citizen, so if I did something wrong, I swear it wasn't intentional or anything. But whatever you think I did, I didn't do it. I mean, I didn't do anything that...I don't *think* I did anything that would be bad enough for my door to be kicked off its hinges and for me to be beaten to the ground and handcuffed.

GRIEG

So nobody told you what you were being charged with?

BERNARD

No.

GRIEG

They just beat the shit out of you and arrested you, huh?

BERNARD

That's about it. They also told me to "shut my goddamn mouth" a lot.

GRIEG

Oh. We really should work on that...

(Pause. GRIEG eats some of her ice cream, glances at the first item inside the manila folder and then glances up at BERNARD. She closes the folder.)

GRIEG

I hope you don't mind that I eat my ice cream while we talk. I want to finish it before it melts.

(BERNARD looks dumbly at her.)

GRIEG

Ice cream melts. Surely, you know that. *Ice* is in the *name*.

BERNARD

Uh...

GRIEG

...You know that. Of course you do. You've probably had ice cream before. I shouldn't assume, but you've had ice cream before at some point?

(BERNARD nods unsurely.)

GRIEG

Klaus over there? It's his birthday. We were having a little bit of cake and ice cream before you were brought in. Working on his birthday. Isn't that the pits? The least you could do, making him come in here on his birthday, is wish him a happy birthday. Its good manners, don't you think, Mr. Reykjavik?

BERNARD

Happy birthday?

(KLAUS grunts and takes a spoonful of ice cream. GRIEG laughs.)

GRIEG

The birthday boy's a little grumpy, I'm afraid. Another year older, but still a long, long way's from retirement, right, Klaus? Mr. Reykjavik, guess how old Klaus is.

BERNARD

Um...

(BERNARD looks at KLAUS, who glowers.)

GRIEG

You'll never guess, Mr. Reykjavik. And he'll never tell. Ask me.

BERNARD

Huh?

GRIEG

Ask me how old Klaus is. Go on. Ask me.

BERNARD

H-how old is he?

GRIEG

None of your goddamn business, Mr. Reykjavik. None of your goddamn business.

(GRIEG finishes her ice cream and tosses her cup in the trash. She sucks on her spoon a little bit and throws it away as well.)

GRIEG

I bet you'd like some ice cream, wouldn't you, Mr. Reykjavik? Maybe with sprinkles and whip cream? Maybe some chocolate chips? But, bad boys don't get ice cream, do they? Most certainly not by the ones that are given the task of punishing said bad boys! What kind of society would that be, huh? Not one fit to live in, I'd say.

(Pause.)

GRIEG

So, was I hearing you correctly earlier? You don't know why you're here?

BERNARD

I already told you...

GRIEG

...I *know* you already told me. I'm asking you to tell me again.

BERNARD

No. I don't know why I'm here.

GRIEG

And you think we've made a mistake? In bringing you here?

BERNARD

Y-yes. I think you did.

GRIEG

You hearing this, Klaus?

(KLAUS nods)

GRIEG

Mr. Reykjavik. First, do you mind if I just call you Bernard? I don't want to keep on with this Mr. Reykjavik shit. You have a real mouthful of a name. I don't know where it's from—I'm thinking not *this* country—but Jesus, is it a mouthful. If I can just call you Bernard, it'd be a lot easier.

BERNARD

I don't mind at all.

GRIEG

Good. Good. So, Bernard! I want to make sure—absolutely sure—that we are on the same page here. You think we got the wrong man. You're saying we made a mistake.

BERNARD

Yes, I'm sorry, but I think you have.

(GRIEG stares at BERNARD for a moment, glances up at KLAUS, and then looks at BERNARD again.)

GRIEG

We don't make mistakes, Bernard. We get paid what we do, because we don't make mistakes. You're guilty of *something* if you're sitting in that chair. We wouldn't even be having this conversation if you weren't guilty of something. Do you understand?

BERNARD

But...

GRIEG

...What?

BERNARD

What am I guilty of?

(Beat. GRIEG picks up the framed picture and looks at.)

GRIEG

You are, of course, aware that our beloved President *HORN* entered immortality last week, yes?

BERNARD

Yes. Of course.

GRIEG

Of course. And you are aware that last Friday was dedicated as a national day of mourning for our beloved leader, yes?

BERNARD

Yes.

GRIEG

Yes. And that the observance of this national day of mourning was mandatory.

BERNARD

Yes. I know. I observed it.

GRIEG

Of course you did. You're a good citizen.

BERNARD

I try to be.

GRIEG

Right. So you've said.

(GRIEG flips open the manila folder briefly, glances at it carelessly, and flips it shut again.)

GRIEG

I can't help but notice something, Bernard. You're not wearing an armband.

(BERNARD is confused)

GRIEG

You're not wearing one of these.

(GRIEG taps her armband.)

GRIEG

Hell, even Klaus is wearing one and he doesn't usually go in for that sort of thing. He feels it clashes with the rest of his wardrobe. I don't know how such a small thing like a black armband can do anything to a man's wardrobe, but to each his own. At any rate, however he feels about the armband, he *is* wearing it. Out of respect.

(Pause.)

GRIEG

Well? Why don't you have one?

BERNARD

I...I guess I forgot to put mine on today.

GRIEG

You forgot? With the streets full of people wearing them?

BERNARD

I...

GRIEG

...Did you go outside today, Bernard? Before you were brought in here?

BERNARD

I went to work...

GRIEG

...You stepped outside, saw all the people wearing black armbands, but it didn't ring any bells, huh? Nothing clicked. Nothing prompted you to turn around, re-enter your home, and grab your missing black armband?

BERNARD

I guess so.

GRIEG

You guess so.

(Pause. GRIEG looks at BERNARD for a moment.)

GRIEG

I suppose you'd like for me to cut right to the chase, huh? We've been here for a while now and, from that stupid look on your face, I'm guessing that you still haven't come to any solid conclusions about why you are sitting here. Shall I divulge, then?

BERNARD

Yes. Please.

(GRIEG picks up the manila folder.)

GRIEG

Well, since you said "please," I *will* divulge.

(GRIEG opens up the folder and takes out a photograph of a crying woman. She looks at it and then slides it over to BERNARD, who picks it up.)

GRIEG

Do you know who that is?

BERNARD

She looks familiar.

GRIEG

You probably remember her from Saturday's paper. She was on the front page. This picture was taken at the funeral procession right when the casket went by her. The caption underneath said something like "mourner displays her grief over the passing of our beloved president, *HORN*." Just look at that picture, Bernard. That woman's name is Helga Roth, very loyal citizen of *WHISTLE*. See how twisted her face is? You're not blind, so you can see that is raw, unbridled mourning. The pinnacle of sorrow, if I do say so myself. A very appropriate display of grief, wouldn't you say?

BERNARD

She does look sad.

GRIEG

Oh, fuck off.

(GRIEG snatches the picture away.)

GRIEG

You hear him, Klaus? "She does look sad." Nothing gets past this guy.

BERNARD

I'm sorry, but what does this have to do with me?

GRIEG

Just hold on. You can say that I'm painting a little bit of a canvas for you here. So just bear with me for a wee bit longer, okay? You don't have anywhere to be, after all.

(GRIEG puts the first picture back into the folder. She starts to flip through the other documents in the folder)

GRIEG

I don't expect you to recognize this one. It didn't make the papers, after all.

(She takes out another photo. It's a picture of BERNARD standing alongside a couple of other people who are mourning. BERNARD, in the photo, has a vacant, almost annoyed expression on his face. GRIEG hands the picture over to BERNARD. BERNARD doesn't seem to recognize himself for a moment, but soon does.)

BERNARD

That's me, isn't it?

GRIEG

You're a regular Sherlock Holmes! Your powers of deduction are impeccable. This picture was taken at the local mourning procession on Friday. Like a good citizen, you showed up. I want you to take a good, hard look at this photo, Bernard and tell me....What's wrong with this picture?

BERNARD

Well, it's not a very good photo of me.

GRIEG

No, that's not the answer I'm looking for. Try again.

BERNARD

I really don't know. I don't see anything wrong.

GRIEG

Look at your eyes, Bernard. Tell me what's missing.

(BERNARD looks at the picture closer.)

BERNARD

I'm...not wearing glasses?

GRIEG

Do you *wear* glasses?

BERNARD

No.

GRIEG

Then obviously that's not what's missing, is it? Guess again.

BERNARD

I give up. I don't know what you're expecting me to see in this picture. Or *not* see. I just don't *see*, okay?

GRIEG

Klaus, tell him what's missing.

(KLAUS crosses over to BERNARD, takes the picture, glances at it, and puts it back down.)

KLAUS

Tears.

(GRIEG reaches into her coat pocket, takes out a candy bar and hands it to KLAUS. KLAUS returns to his previous position and unwraps the candy)

GRIEG

That could've been your prize, Bernard, if you had answered correctly.

BERNARD

Wait. Tears?

GRIEG

That's what the man said. Now, Bernard, do you care to explain why you couldn't bring yourself to shed a single tear for the passing of our beloved leader, *HORN*?

(BERNARD tries to think of an answer.)

GRIEG

Any time, Bernard.