

THE OBEDIENCE OF KOLYA S

by

AJ Dehany

29 Plays Later 2016 Challenge Day 19

Pick a topic you know nothing about. Make it theatrical. Plot.

Started off as an attempt to reconstruct a film I saw twenty years ago but can't remember. Turned into something else inspired by Vaclav Havel and Heinrich Böll, but I didn't have time to execute it. As it is, it's pretty oblique.

CHARACTERS

KOLYA S

ANTON F

LENKA K

ajdehany@gmail.com

SCENE 1

EASTERN BLOC POLITICAL RADIO STATION.
BARRICADED IN, SIEGE SITUATION, NOISE.
LOW EMERGENCY LIGHTING.

THE PALE WITHERED FORM OF KOLYA S IS
SLUMPED IN THE CORNER.

ANTON AND LENKA ARE WAITING ABOUT
NERVOUSLY AND TALKING.

ANTON I found myself with a nun in a cupboard of
bread. I said to myself "What ever happens, I'll
be eating bread."

LENKA: What did the nun say?

ANTON: I couldn't understand her dialect.

LENKA: Why was she in the cupboard?

THE LIGHTS FLICKER UP

ANTON: Are we back?

LENKA SPRINGS UP

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN AGAIN

LENKA: Why was there bread in the cupboard?

ANTON: The bread was from a bakery that had been
liberated. They took away the old couple and
left all the bread, which is unthinkable.

LENKA: How much bread?

ANTON: A cupboard's worth. Cupboard's worth of bread.

LENKA: It'd be stale by the time you got through it.

ANTON: You wouldn't have it all to yourself.

LENKA: I might. I'm starving. Barricaded in and he
talks about bread.

ANTON: We always talk about bread when there's no
bread. That's a universal.

LENKA: There is universally bread.

ANTON: Yes, bread exists. But do we see any of it? When did you last get a crusty roll and butter up a slice?

LENKA: Will you stop?

KOLYA STIRS

ANTON: Now you've done it.

THEY ATTEND TO KOLYA BUT DON'T TOUCH HIM

LENKA: Is he still asleep?

ANTON: Kolya! Kolya? I think he's still asleep.

LENKA: Kolya! He's asleep.

ANTON: How can you tell?

LENKA: His eyelids twitch when he's asleep. They don't when he's - when he's not asleep.

ANTON: His eyelids twitch when he does the predictions too.

LENKA: Do they?

ANTON: Of course. It's the same as dreaming. When he makes the predictions, he's just dreaming them.

LENKA: He's awake though when he makes the predictions.

ANTON: I don't know. I think he's asleep.

LENKA: He's not asleep.

ANTON: It's like sleepwalking. Or a trance state.

LENKA: Trance, yeah, it's more like a trance.

ANTON: Should we wake him?

LENKA: The last one was pretty graphic. I say leave him for a while.

ANTON: We haven't got a while, Lenka. The counter-revolution. You can hear them scraping towards us, inch by inch. If Witold can just get the

power back up, we can broadcast.

LENKA: It will do no good, Anton.

ANTON: It's all we have. The word.

LENKA: Can words change anything?

ANTON: They're all we have. We have to try, Lenka.

SCENE 2

THE LIGHTS GO UP

ANTON: At last!

LENKA: He did it! Witold, I would kiss your grandmother's beads.

ANTON: Let's get back on the air. Have you got the script?

LENKA: Should we improvise?

ANTON: Improvise on the essay.

LENKA: We could read it.

ANTON: Everyone's read it.

LENKA: It bears repeating.

THEY BROADCAST

ANTON: This is Free Liberation Radio. Calling all free individuals.

LENKA: All those with an intimate and personal life struggling to sustain itself against the background of war, terrorism, political divisions, and profound economic and social transition.

ANTON: Power relations are best described as a labyrinth of influence, repression, fear and self-censorship which swallows up everyone within it.

LENKA: At the very least by rendering them silent, stultified and marked by some undesirable prejudices of the powerful.

ANTON: Calling all those stubborn and eccentric individualists opposed to the mechanisms of the state and public institutions.

LENKA: Figures of authority in government, business, and in the Church. Their conformism, lack of courage, self-satisfied attitude and abuse of power.

ANTON: Within the system, every individual is trapped within a dense network of the state's governing instruments

LENKA: Themselves legitimated by a flexible but comprehensive ideology. Kolya S calls it a 'secularized religion'.

ANTON: One day, the flickering candles will burn through the ice. It's important to remember that no one knows when that day will come.

LENKA: In Poland it took 10 years, in Hungary 10 months, in East Germany 10 weeks; perhaps here it will take 10 days.

ANTON: The oppressed always contain within themselves the power to remedy their own powerlessness.

LENKA: Kolya S tells us that individuals living in truth in their daily life they automatically differentiate themselves from the officially mandated culture proscribed by the State; since power is only effective inasmuch as citizens are willing to submit to it.

LENKA: This is post-totalitarianism. I do not wish to imply by the prefix "post-" that the system is no longer totalitarian; on the contrary, I mean that it is totalitarian in a way fundamentally different from classical dictatorships...

SCENE 3

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN AGAIN

ANTON: Damn! Did we get it?

LENKA: Kolya . . .

KOLYA STIRS, AND RISES. HE IS
FORMIDABLE AND INSCRUTABLE

LENKA: Kolya!

ANTON: I think it's time.

LENKA: Kolya, come now.

ANTON: Are you ready?

THEY SIMULTANEOUSLY PLACE THEIR HANDS
ON KOLYA

ALL THREE ARE DRAWN INTO A COMMUNION
OF MIND AND BODY

ABRUPTLY IT ENDS AND THEY FALL AWAY
FROM EACH OTHER

KOLYA SLUMPS DOWN AGAIN EXHAUSTED

LENKA AND ANTON REEL

LENKA: What did... what did he tell you?

ANTON: I don't want to die.

LENKA: You're going to die? He said that? Answer me!

ANTON: The terrible thing is I'm going to die...soon!

LENKA: Did he tell you?

ANTON: It's like a dream.

LENKA: Is it a dream or is it a prediction?

ANTON: How can you tell the difference?

LENKA: Anton, is it real?

ANTON: Kolya's predictions. They've never been wrong.

LENKA: They'll hang us before you get the chance to
die.

ANTON: That's true.

LENKA: I think Kolya might be slipping.

ANTON: Slipping?

LENKA: Slipping away from us. The noise is getting
louder. We can't protect him much longer.

ANTON: One more dream. One more dream, Lenka.

LENKA: Kolya has used up all his dreams.

ANTON: Do you believe that?

LENKA: I'm starting to.

ANTON: There's still a chance.

LENKA: They're old ideas, Anton. We're finished.
Kolya's world is over.

SCENE 4

THE LIGHTS GO UP AGAIN

ANTON: Witold, you star!

LENKA: Hey!

ANTON: Lenka, what now? Quickly.

LENKA: It's time to do the play.

THEY BROADCAST

ANTON: The protagonist is Hugo Pludek.

LENKA: An average person from a middle-class Czech family.

ANTON: His parents are worried about his future, so they arrange an appointment for him with the influential Mr. Kalabis.

LENKA: Kalabis cannot show up because he is going to a garden party held by the Liquidation Office, so Hugo's parents send him there.

ANTON: Hugo does not find Kalabis, instead starting a sequence of absurd encounters.

LENKA: All of the functionaries of the Liquidation Office speak in a degenerate, ideological, content-free language, as is expected for their role in the bureaucratic system.

ANTON: Hugo is intelligent and adaptive, and is therefore able to adjust his behaviour.

LENKA: He learns to speak platitudinally, using clichés that do not mean anything real, and finally becomes the head of the newly created Central Inauguration and Liquidation Committee.

ANTON: As a result, he completely loses his identity.

LENKA: At the end of the play, Hugo comes home so

changed that his own parents do not recognise him.

LONG PAUSE

THEY TALK OFF-MIKE

ANTON: Put just five more minutes' silence on the airwaves.

LENKA: Oh, all right. But give me a cigarette at least.

ANTON: Why do you have to smoke so many cigarettes?

LENKA: I began smoking as a teenager. I'll never quit, not till the end of his days. The answer lies in the psyche. In my youth, in the madness of the Nazi war, cigarettes assumed a daunting stature as essential commodities. That image of something difficult to obtain never went away. They arouse me like a hunger that can never be assuaged.

SCENE 5

THE LIGHTS GO DOWN AGAIN

ANTON: Damn. Witold!

LENKA: Anton. Look! It's Kolya . . .

KOLYA STIRS, AND RISES. HE IS
FORMIDABLE AND INSCRUTABLE

LENKA: Kolya!

ANTON: What's he doing?

LENKA: It must be the last message.

ANTON: He'd better hurry, they're already inside.

LENKA: I can hear them.

ANTON: Lenka?

LENKA: Anton.

THEY SIMULTANEOUSLY PLACE THEIR HANDS
ON KOLYA

ALL THREE ARE DRAWN INTO A COMMUNION

OF MIND AND BODY

ABRUPTLY IT ENDS AND THEY FALL AWAY
FROM EACH OTHER

KOLYA SLUMPS DOWN AGAIN EXHAUSTED

LENKA AND ANTON REEL

LENKA: What did he tell you?

ANTON STAGGERS AROUND DAZEDLY

Tell me, Anton! This is important. They're
almost inside.

ANTON: Wars really don't end. They grow silent and
become nightmares.

SCENE 6

EVERYTHING SHAKES. COMPLETE NOISE AND
CONFUSION. THEY ARE ALMOST INSIDE.

ANTON AND LENKA CLING TO THE SHIVERING
FORM OF KOLYA AS IF TO PROTECT HIM, AS
THE DOORS ARE BROKEN IN.

ANTON: Kolya!

LENKA: Kolya!

BLACKOUT.

CURTAIN