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On the Latch

ONE-ACT PLAY

Characters

Prosecutor (m)

Citizen (m)

Judge (m)

Journalist (m)

Lamara, the cleaner (w)

Fly

The scene remains the same throughout the play. It is the office of the Prosecutor, furnished with a big wooden table, an old shabby bookcase and several chairs. In accordance with the style of such governmental buildings, the windows are much taller than in modern office blocks. The window is an important part of the scene as it is there that the Fly abides. The table is stacked with heaps of paper. There is a portrait of a governmental official on the wall. It is for the director to decide whether it should be a real official or a photo representing a generalized image of a man holding power. Next to the portrait there are a number of icons and crosses – a prayer corner.

The Prosecutor is at the table, engrossed in work. But what is his job? Reading, studying the cases and writing verdicts.

The silence is so complete one could hear a fly, which actually is the case. The Fly is about to set itself free by breaking the glass. It persistently hits the glass pane with its head: Buzz, buzz, buzz, buzz!

The heavy wooden office door opens with a screech. Enter the Citizen.

CITIZEN [with his head through the crack] : Mr Prosecutor, I've come...

[Prosecutor ignores him, continuing to work on his papers.]

CITIZEN [coughing]: Ahem... Excuse me, I've come...

PROSECUTOR: Yes?

CITIZEN: I'm just an ordinary citizen of this country, one of its miserable children, no, a happy one. Ahem... What nonsense I'm saying...

PROSECUTOR: What do you want?

CITIZEN: Nothing much. But I'd like you to note that I've come of my own accord, to state my viewpoint, so to say.

PROSECUTOR: I've got no time for you, Citizen. Close the door!

CITIZEN: As you wish.

[The heavy wooden door closes with a screech. For some time we are supposed to watch the PROSECUTOR'S ideas being laboriously transferred onto the sheet of paper and to appreciate the difficulty of his job. Instead, we can hear the Fly repeatedly hitting the glass pane: Buzz, buzz, buzz! The door opens again, revealing the Citizen's head.]

PROSECUTOR [looking up for the first time]: I've told you I'm busy! Close the door!

CITIZEN: If I close it now, I won't be able to open it, ever.

PROSECUTOR: What do you mean?

CITIZEN: I found it extremely difficult to take the decision as it is, and now you're telling me to go away.

PROSECUTOR: You should have taken care of your own decisions yourself, Citizen.

CITIZEN: And don't you want to find out what brought me here?

PROSECUTOR: No!

CITIZEN: Yes but...

PROSECUTOR [*shouting, hitting the desk with his fist*]: Get out of here!

CITIZEN: I'm not really inside, I've only got my head inside.

PROSECUTOR: Do you think I'm in the mood for jokes?

CITIZEN: Why are you yelling at me? What, if the citizen of the country has come to confess, the Prosecutor shouldn't listen?

PROSECUTOR: What can a person of your looks confess to?

CITIZEN: I'm not sure. I just know I've committed a crime.

PROSECUTOR: This is my last warning. Close the door!

CITIZEN: As you wish. But please keep in mind that the fate of my country will be your responsibility.

[The Citizen's head disappears. The PROSECUTOR springs up and runs after the Citizen.]

PROSECUTOR: Citizen, wait! Don't go, Citizen! Wait! [*He gets into the corridor, his voice becoming distant.*] You must have misunderstood me. Please, don't run! [*His voice fades away as he gets farther from the office.*]

[Only the sound of a FLY trying to escape the PROSECUTOR'S room can be heard. It seems to be attempting to break the window: Buzz, buzz, buzz... The door opens in a short while as the PROSECUTOR and the CITIZEN return.]

PROSECUTOR [*panting*]: Please come in, Citizen, have a seat. [*Offers him a seat.*] Please, have a seat. Make yourself comfortable, as the likes of you might say...

CITIZEN [*sitting down*]: Thank you, thank you...

PROSECUTOR: Why didn't you state your purpose from the start?

CITIZEN: I said I wanted to come in, didn't I?

PROSECUTOR: Apparently I didn't hear you.

CITIZEN: How's that? I clearly said I took a serious step in coming here and that I wanted to discuss my decision in detail.

PROSECUTOR: Let's forget our little misunderstanding... I've got such a lot to do, see, the amount of paperwork? But when I became a Prosecutor, I thought I'd investigate crime, just like Sherlock Holmes, like other famous detectives from the movies, you know, looking for clues with a magnifying-glass... But instead, I'm buried under all this paperwork as if the crime evidence and proofs are hidden among them.

CITIZEN: I've always believed the Prosecutor's job was extremely important.

PROSECUTOR: Are you joking? Look at these piles, dozens, hundreds of volumes, but what's the use? 'Words, words, words', as Shakespeare said. Personally, I like saying: 'Volumes, volumes, volumes...'

CITIZEN: I don't really know how to thank you.

PROSECUTOR: You don't have to, really.

CITIZEN: Where shall I start?

PROSECUTOR: So, you are going to assassinate the President?

CITIZEN: Me? What's that you're saying? Never in my life.

PROSECUTOR: Didn't you say the President's life was in danger?

CITIZEN: Did I?

PROSECUTOR: You did.

CITIZEN: How come I don't remember?

PROSECUTOR: Calm down, don't worry. Would you like to have a cigarette?

CITIZEN: With pleasure.

PROSECUTOR: Here, please have one.

CITIZEN: Thanks a lot.

[Prosecutor lights a match for Citizen.]

CITIZEN *[inhaling deeply]*: Phew... What cigarette is this?

PROSECUTOR: Let's get down to our business.

CITIZEN: Don't hurry me. [*Inhales deeply.*] Phew... I'd like to tell you a little about myself.

PROSECUTOR: Interesting, interesting, but please make it short.

CITIZEN: I'll try. Incidentally, it'd be better if you stop hovering above me and take a seat. I've got the impression you're hurrying me. And when I hurry, I find it difficult to stay focused and I might...

PROSECUTOR: All right. I'm all ears.

CITIZEN: I'm just an ordinary citizen, one of the miserable children of this country.

PROSECUTOR: You've said that before.

CITIZEN: Have I? I wasn't paying attention. [*Takes another drag at his cigarette.*] Phew... It's not very frequent that you come across real American tobacco these days.

PROSECUTOR [*interrupting*]: Please, closer to our business.

CITIZEN: As I said, there are plenty like me in this country, those who earn their daily bread, try to support their families and enjoy the seeming stability.

PROSECUTOR: What has that got to do with the assassination?

CITIZEN: What's that you're saying?

PROSECUTOR: Sorry. Please, go on.

CITIZEN: I work. [*Inhales deeply.*] Phew...

PROSECUTOR: You take suspiciously long to finish your fag.

CITIZEN: I'm an engineer, but work in a bakery as a porter. I can't claim I'm excited about my job, but the family needs supporting, doesn't it?

PROSECUTOR: Sure, sure...

CITIZEN: I've got a wife and two children.

PROSECUTOR: I see.

CITIZEN: I love my country, I'm a true patriot and so on. Do you want to know why I'm here?

PROSECUTOR: Would you like another cigarette?

CITIZEN: You must be joking.

PROSECUTOR: I'm not! Have another.

CITIZEN: I'd like to relieve my heart and confess.

PROSECUTOR: And I'd love to hear you out.

CITIZEN: The thing is that I haven't committed any crime yet and I'm not going to break any laws, but...

PROSECUTOR: But you're planning to assassinate the President, right?

CITIZEN: Why are you referring to this stupid assassination over and over again?

PROSECUTOR: Then what are you doing here?

CITIZEN: I'm scared!

PROSECUTOR: Scared of what?

CITIZEN: I'm scared, because suppose I've committed a crime, but don't know about it.

PROSECUTOR: Wait a minute...

CITIZEN: Everyone's detained, arrested, blamed and accused in this country. But I've come on my own so that you can interrogate me, detain if necessary, and find out if I'm guilty of committing some crime against my country and my people!

PROSECUTOR: But do you feel guilty?

CITIZEN: Of course I do! Why would I come if I didn't? But I don't really know why I feel so. I thought I'd come of my own accord before I was arrested. I reasoned that I'd come and you'd interrogate and possibly I'd be able to finally find out what crime I'm guilty of.

PROSECUTOR: Can you try to recall any crime you might have committed?

CITIZEN: Nothing except the fact that instead of throwing the left-over buns into the bin, I take them home.

PROSECUTOR: But why did I get the impression you were planning assassination?

CITIZEN: No idea. It's you who's been saying that over and over again. I said I wanted to confess as it has to do with the future of our country.

PROSECUTOR: I believe you're unnecessarily nervous.

CITIZEN: Because I'm seized with dread. I'd like to explain if you're willing to listen. I'm a law-abiding citizen. Honest, conscientious – I've never killed a fly in my life! But lately I've been obsessed with the fear that I'm about to be arrested. This dread follows me everywhere, and whether my phone rings or there are visitors at my place, the feeling never leaves me. Finally, I began to think I might have committed a crime but am

completely unaware of it. I decided to talk to someone more experienced and ask for advice. Can I be deeply mistaken considering myself an honest person? Can it be that I'm not aware of my crime? I may start with stealing buns and finish with a coup d'état, no? Maybe I've brought my children up in a wrong way or suppose my wife's a terrorist? How do I know? So, here I am. I've come to safeguard myself by declaring: I'm guilty, but not sure of what crime.

PROSECUTOR: I need to take a pee.

CITIZEN: Interrogate me! Question me and find me guilty, prove me dangerous for the society, prove I've committed a grave crime against my country and my people! I demand to be questioned in the most ruthless way! Interrogate so that I bleed, like in the days of yore, so that my heart snaps! Don't spare me, don't pity me!

PROSECUTOR: Get out of here!

CITIZEN: Please, don't let me go! Don't throw me out! I'm guilty! Is it absolutely necessary to detain one only based on unquestionable evidence? Isn't inner conviction enough? Isn't the fear which has seized my mind sufficiently convincing to serve as evidence? Since when has our country lost interest in people's feelings and emotions? I demand an explanation.

[There is a knock on the heavy wooden door. The quarrel subsides. The knock is heard again. The wooden door opens with a screech. Enter Judge.]

JUDGE: There were times when all doors stood open for me.

PROSECUTOR: Times have changed.

JUDGE: I'm the Judge. Shall I tell you my credo? It's the quest for Truth, defying the authorities, 'Plato is my friend, but...', also love and loyalty to my chosen profession. My motto? 'We learn through learning, we are judged through our judgement.' The scope of my interests includes the Mesopotamian culture, Georgian drama, folklore, mythology, history of religion, Biblical studies and the essence of Law. Can I come in?
[He closes the heavy wooden door.] I see I have inadvertently interrupted your conversation, for with I apologize. I'm looking for the Prosecutor.

PROSECUTOR: Aren't you that famous judge whose name holds the criminal world trembling with fear? Who is as unblemished as a clean sheet of paper, as unbiased as the Supreme Being and as wise as Socrates? Please, come in.

JUDGE: I've come on the spur of the moment, without proper warning. Please, forgive my audacity.

PROSECUTOR: Oh, it's such a great honour to see you in my humble den.

JUDGE: Pleased to meet you. But I believe I've interrupted something.

PROSECUTOR: The Citizen is here on a private business.

JUDGE: Dealing with their private business is our duty.

PROSECUTOR: Correct, provided you know what their business is.

JUDGE: Has the prosecutor's job become so complicated?

PROSECUTOR: As you well know, under the dictatorial rule, the authorities primarily rely on and trust their law enforcement structures – the police and the court.

JUDGE: Unfortunately, the court is as redundant as this Citizen here.

PROSECUTOR: However, we strive to differentiate between a criminal and an honest citizen.

JUDGE: But our suspicions should be either supported or refuted by the court, otherwise my function as a judge will become an unwanted burden for the country.

PROSECUTOR: You are absolutely right, Your Honour, but it's also true that the Devil doesn't need an advocate.

JUDGE: Neither does a saint.

[An uncomfortable pause follows. All three look up. The exhausted FLY stops to take a break from its futile efforts.]

FLY: I'm a fly, an ordinary fly. I'm here purely accidentally. I've foolishly followed the cleaner's dirty broom and have been trying to escape ever since. Oh, how horrifying the filthy broom of Prosecutor's office is! I've been to all sorts of places, seen all sorts of things, but never have I imagined the conditions could be as unsanitary as here. You might hear my desperation. Listen to this! *[Hitting the glass with its head.]* Buzz, buzz, buzz... My poor head is about to be squashed and not a single soul has shown as much sensitivity as to open the window for me. Is it too much to ask? But what do they care about a poor fly's fate? No, it's not worth living in this country. Have to go

somewhere, away from here. But where? Which country? Who'd need me there? And among all those alien flies. I can't really be a dish washer or a cleaner. I'm not that young to abandon everything and flee. On the other hand, it's not that difficult if one's determined. All I need is to reach the airport. Then it's the customs, but I know how to dodge them. They say the customs at the other end are pretty strict. They might not let you into the country at all, actually deport you on the very same plane. I do find it hard to leave my family behind. What should I say to my little ones? That I'm fed up with the local shit and want to try some of theirs? Won't they tell me they'd also like to taste the capitalist one? Won't they? And what answer can I give them? It's very difficult for the fly of my age to abandon his family and move to foreign parts. But the way things are, it seems I've got no choice. Suppose I was somewhere abroad, say, England... Just imagine... Wow! Wonderful! I'd say, super! Wouldn't an Englishman be smart enough to open this window and set me free? Our Prosecutor isn't a match for an English one. No, no, I have to, I just have to leave this country, save myself. And I can't be blamed. Just look at them! The Prosecutor, the miserable Citizen and this self-proclaimed Judge. Says he's never stolen anything except some left-over buns. Can you believe it? Take a good look at him and you'll immediately realize he's lying. I'm sure he was sacked from his previous job because he'd stolen a bulb, a ruler or a pencil. It's an urge of every Soviet person to take something from the workplace when no one's looking. That's why he was sacked. Lost his job, but now he should be grateful he's a bun porter. The likes of him are unemployed in thousands. Seen them in the streets. I fly into a house and what do I see? Empty shelves, empty dust-bins, clean plates. Nothing in their kitchens at all. And he's found a job, but is still stealing buns. That's a true Soviet citizen! And the reason he's come here is to hide some crime committed in the past. Otherwise, no self-respecting dictatorial system would arrest him. Who'd need this dude with an empty head? Not worth the trouble. If you ask me, dictatorship is the rule of law, it's when a culprit gets what he deserves. Otherwise, where are we heading? Should a needle's thief be released and a camel's thief detained? No way! The law should apply to everyone. If only I manage to get out of here, I swear I'll never return to the Prosecutor's office, ever! Why did I follow Lamara's immoral broom? Indeed, I deserve worse. [*Hitting the glass pane.*] Buzz, buzz, buzz...

[The Prosecutor, Judge and Citizen look away not having noticed anything worth their attention except a fly.]

PROSECUTOR: I've just had one of the biggest disappointments in my life. I thought I was to uncover a major crime, but what did I get instead? What do you see? A typical unlucky citizen of this country, who is so scared of the dictatorship that he suspects crime everywhere. Couldn't he have admitted to the plans to assassinate the President or to prepare a coup d'état? Or a small terrorist attack at least? Couldn't you, Citizen? What difference does it make to you what charges you'd be arrested on? But you're scared stiff! Do you think you can take the blame for a couple of serious crimes? That'd keep both of us happy...

CITIZEN *[to Prosecutor]*: You still don't get it. I haven't committed any crime and I'm not going to. I just fear I might have done something in the past of which I'm totally unaware.

PROSECUTOR: See, Your Honour? And you said the court was becoming redundant. Do you know what the benefit of the dictatorship is? It makes both, the honest and the wrong-doer, respect the rule of law. Do you believe we don't appreciate the importance of justice here in the Prosecutor's Office? But in a country like ours, justice cannot be achieved through freedom. First you need fear and then justice.

JUDGE: I agree.

PROSECUTOR: However, the most significant point is that he hasn't committed any crime. He could have said: 'I don't remember', 'I might have', 'I'm not sure, but...', or 'I didn't think it was so serious', or 'It's not my fault', or 'Devil got the better of me'. But nothing of the kind! I've got nothing to charge him with. He's neither a criminal nor a junkie. Excellent material for a detective story! Look at him, do you like what you see?

CITIZEN: Can I have another cigarette? I've decided not to buy them any more. Thank you. *[He strikes a match, lights a cigarette and inhales deeply.]* Phew... It's my second today. And it's absolutely marvelous. *[Inhaling deeply.]* Phew... You know, once I took the decision and didn't smoke for as long as six months. And guess what?

PROSECUTOR: I see you've started again.

CITIZEN: I've discovered that giving up is the easiest thing in the world.

[*Takes a deep drag at his cigarette.*] Phew... Exactly in the same way as I'm smoking now, I can give up any time I wish.

PROSECUTOR: Especially that the package is practically empty and I've got to stay here long.

CITIZEN: What about you, Your Honour? Have you tried giving up?

PROSECUTOR [*to Judge*]: See how insolent he is?

JUDGE [*to Prosecutor*]: Such a powerful man as you, Mr Prosecutor, shouldn't have found it hard to kick him out if you chose to.

PROSECUTOR: Or arrest him.

CITIZEN: Thank you, Your Honour. If not for you, he wasn't going to detain me. I'm very grateful for your assistance. I hope when I appear in court, you will consider the fact that I've given myself up, came here of my own accord, so to say.

PROSECUTOR [*to Judge*]: I think now he's mocking you.

JUDGE [*to Citizen*]: I'm afraid, my good fellow, your luck or lack of it is entirely in the Prosecutor's hands.

CITIZEN [*to Judge*]: How's that?

JUDGE: Because we've got a dictatorial country.

CITIZEN: So what? What if we've got dictatorship? What if we live in an authoritarian country? Shouldn't I have the right to be arrested? Frankly, I don't see what kind of dictatorship it is.

PROSECUTOR [*to Judge*]: It's our local kind. I can catch those I want to. [*To Citizen.*] For instance, I don't want to arrest you, so I won't and there's no law to force me to.

CITIZEN: I'm not talking to you, I'm addressing the Judge, so please don't interfere with our conversation.

PROSECUTOR: When I don't catch you but throw you out into the street instead, we'll see which conversations and whose talks you're going to interfere with!

CITIZEN: Control yourself, not so loud! Your Honour, please tell him something or else I'm going to have a heart attack due to all this injustice.

PROSECUTOR: Can you believe it? Came humbly, asked if he could stay for a couple of minutes, but look at him now! He's in my office ordering me around! I'm not going to arrest you!

CITIZEN: You are!

PROSECUTOR: No, I'm not!

CITIZEN: You pretty well will!

PROSECUTOR: Like hell I will! My foot!

CITIZEN: And both of mine! You'll arrest me!

PROSECUTOR: No, I said, no! I won't become a laughing stock because of you!

CITIZEN *[to Judge]*: See? See how concerned he is with his own reputation but doesn't give a damn about the national security?

PROSECUTOR *[to Judge]*: What shall I tell my superiors? That I've detained this clown? When they ask me on what charges, what shall I say? That I don't know and neither does the detained? How can I arrest someone only because he's afraid of being arrested?

CITIZEN *[to Judge]*: Since when has the Prosecutor's Office stopped arresting people?

PROSECUTOR *[to Judge]*: Tell him – since today, since this very minute!

CITIZEN *[to Judge]*: But previously people used to be arrested without telling them the reason. How was that possible? Ask him, how?

PROSECUTOR *[to Judge]*: It was us who initiated the arrests. They didn't give themselves up. Please, pass my words to him.

CITIZEN *[to Judge]*: Should I wait until I commit a crime? No way!

PROSECUTOR *[to Judge]*: Please, Your Honour, help me. He might listen to your reasoning.

JUDGE: Incidentally, I've come because of the same reason. Mr Prosecutor, you are well aware of the fact that the primary function of us, the judges, is to find the truth and to defend justice. I've served this principle all my professional life, but now I've got the feeling that I'm doing something wrong without really realizing what exactly.

PROSECUTOR: What wrong can a judge do?

JUDGE: For instance, I'm always scrutinizing the people in my court through a magnifying glass. I'm trying to differentiate the good from the bad, so to say. Frankly speaking, it's not that hard, but considering the criminal consciousness of our people, the rising number of crime and the extreme manifestations of cruelty, it's easy to appreciate the difficulty of the conditions I have to work in.

PROSECUTOR *[to Citizen]*: Seems like I've got a really lucky day...

JUDGE: However, I have to warn you not to hope to use my confession for your promotion. True, I'm in the Prosecutor's Office and should expect anything from you, but still... We live in the times when I'm not sure on what charges I'm sending people to prison. Just the other day, for example, I sentenced a village lad for stealing his neighbour's chicken. Gave him four years. Clearly, he was hungry and that's why I sentenced him for four years, not seven. In the meantime, some governmental officers...

PROSECUTOR: Go on, please, go on.

JUDGE: No need, really. Even the walls have ears nowadays. It's essential that you detain me, keep me inside this building, lock me up properly in a cell, or else I've got the impression I'm about to commit something graver. Then I won't get away with less than a life sentence.

PROSECUTOR: You? You've got such an unblemished reputation! Who can arrest you?

JUDGE: I'm guilty.

PROSECUTOR: But aren't you going to say of what?

JUDGE: I don't know, I swear. God knows it's only a feeling.

CITIZEN [*to Prosecutor*]: What did I tell you?

JUDGE [*to Citizen*]: I thought only I had such a feeling.

CITIZEN [*to Prosecutor*]: See, Mr Prosecutor, see? You've got no choice.

PROSECUTOR [*to Judge*]: How can I if you don't even know what crime you've committed? What are they going to say at the top?

JUDGE: Lately, more often than not, my sympathy lies with the accused. As if I've been changed. For some reason I definitely sympathize with the criminals, more than I'd like to admit.

CITIZEN: Must be because of your reputation.

JUDGE: My reputation? And what is it?

CITIZEN: To tell the truth, rather dubious. They say you comply with the officials and follow their directives. Also...

PROSECUTOR: Don't listen, Your Honour, he's insane!

JUDGE: No, no, I'm curious what common people say about me.

CITIZEN: They say you're sending innocent people to prison. They also say that if you don't, you yourself will be arrested.

JUDGE: Unfortunately, people aren't mistaken.

PROSECUTOR: This man really deserves to be arrested for insulting the Judge.

CITIZEN: I only repeat the opinion expressed by general public.

JUDGE: I know, I'm perfectly aware of it all, that's why I've come of my own accord. Just in case...

CITIZEN: Good for you, Your Honour! You've taken the right decision. In the end, what's more precious than an unblemished name?

PROSECUTOR [*to Citizen*]: I think you're overdoing. Have you forgotten where you are? It's the Prosecutor's Office, not a mental asylum!

JUDGE [*to Prosecutor*]: Exactly! That's why I'm here.

CITIZEN [*to Prosecutor*]: I demand to record the fact that we came to give ourselves up and that our free-will should be entered in the minutes. These should be written immediately and shown to us. I don't trust you. [*To Judge.*] Your Honour, we have to insist it is done without any further delay, otherwise, God knows what they'll add to their records.

JUDGE: I demand that the minutes of our talk are kept!

PROSECUTOR: Are you kidding?

CITIZEN: I'm a citizen of this country and demand that my rights are respected! I demand the minutes and a lawyer!

PROSECUTOR: Get out of my room, now!

JUDGE: Don't you dare yell at the common people! He's guilty, not someone else. So do what you're asked to.

PROSECUTOR: I think you're both mad, raving mad!

JUDGE: It's you who's mad, not us! What's so unbelievable? That a guilty person admits to a crime?

PROSECUTOR: But shouldn't you tell me what crime you've committed?

CITIZEN: Does it matter?

JUDGE: Have you never heard of confession?

PROSECUTOR: And have you never heard of presumption of innocence? Are you trying to kid me?

[There is a knock on the door. The heavy wooden door slowly opens. Lamara, the cleaner, comes in with a broom and a candle in her hand.]

PROSECUTOR: Is that you, Lamara? What do you want?
 LAMARA: Shall I clean the room? Everyone's gone. It's getting late.
 PROSECUTOR: Please, Lamara, leave me alone, will you?
 LAMARA: Shouldn't I clean?

[She begins to sweep the floor.]

PROSECUTOR: Leave me alone, Lamara!
 LAMARA: But didn't you ask me not to clean in the mornings and come in the evenings instead?
 PROSECUTOR: Can't you see I'm kind of busy at the moment?
 LAMARA: You're always busy. Does it mean I shouldn't clean at all?
 PROSECUTOR: Lamara, leave the room now, immediately, or I'll show you where to get off!
 LAMARA: Then you can stay in this filth!
 PROSECUTOR: It's none of your business whether I'm in filth or not. Get out!
 LAMARA: Till now it was my business, no? What has changed?
 PROSECUTOR: Lamara, please, come later. And from now on, always come later.
 LAMARA: But didn't you ask me clean in the evening?
 PROSECUTOR: Yes, but from now on I'd like you to come much later.
 LAMARA: Oh, really? Anything else you fancy? I've got my own things to take care of. I'm not like you, sitting here, in this hole all days.
 PROSECUTOR: Lamara, close the door!
 LAMARA *[stops sweeping the floor]*: Know what? All of you, go home now and continue in the morning. Go, go, let me clean the place.
 PROSECUTOR *[drawing a handgun from his belt]*: Lamara, you're trying my patience!

[Lamara takes flight in fear. The wooden door closes quickly.]

FLY: I'm an ordinary fly. *[Hits the glass.]* Buzz, buzz, buzz... Can you hear me? Enough to make any fly mad. No one's going to open the window for me. That's the woman, Lamara, whose damn broom I took refuge in. Thought I'd find a decent room

in this building. And here I am with a splitting headache. People think flies are so dumb we don't understand there's glass in the pane. What's easier to guess? There's glass, for sure, and glass isn't the same as the air to fly freely though. We know, gents, we know. But this is how we flies try to attract your attention. We hope against all odds that it will eventually dawn on your human minds to open the window and let us out. Can't you do such a simple thing? Can't you get into your heads that prison doesn't need metal gates? Glass would be enough. Want to know what's the difference between you and the seemingly honest Judge in this filthy room? Now, the public demands justice in the court. Wherever you fly, that's the talk on TV, everyone's discussing it. In my opinion, the matter is very different. Previously, anyone could bribe a judge. Any thief, any murderer. Nowadays no one can, they've lost the possibility. And that's what makes people angry. The rest is crap. True, we're still quite far from justice. But when has it been otherwise? When has the justice been truly fair in a country like ours? When, I'm asking you? Never! Today, under this dictatorship, bribes don't work, so criminals are sent to prison. No wonder people are unhappy. On the other hand, don't break the law and you won't end up in jail. If I hadn't seen with my own two eyes what's happening in this room, I wouldn't have believed. But isn't it clear the innocent aren't detained? Haven't you heard yourselves? But what have I done to deserve this? Lamara's left. She doesn't care. Generally speaking, for the likes of her, it doesn't really matter whether there's democracy or dictatorship. Both, the authorities and the opposition need her broom equally. Though the opposition is mainly in jail nowadays, but cells also need cleaning, don't they? Proper sanitary conditions are a must. But who cares except Lamara? What did you ask? Me? Oh, no, I don't like filth. If that's what you believe, you're very wrong. It's just that what you, humans, consider rubbish and waste is where I find food for my poor little ones. Don't you do the same? Do you genuinely believe the Prosecutor enjoys arresting people? Delving into their evil intentions or rummaging in their dirty linen? But what choice has he got? He also has hungry children waiting to be fed. That's why he's obliged to treat everyone with suspicion, uncover their hidden intentions and bring them to the light of the day. As a result, he's promoted and given a bonus which he can take home to his hungry kids and wife. The whole family will gather around the table, have a good meal and even finish with a delicious apple-pie. But who on earth is brave enough to ask the Prosecutor what lies at the bottom of his heart? Who's going to find at what price he's fed his family? What

nerves has it cost him? No one! They're pulling him in all directions. The kids want new toys, the wife wants new clothes, the elderly parents medicine... That's how it is. The next morning our poor Prosecutor heads for the office, walks into the room, which Lamara has cleaned, and gets down to the routine of rummaging through someone's dirty linen again. That's the heart of the matter.

[The heavy wooden door opens with a screech. Enter the Journalist.]

JOURNALIST: Hello, Mr Prosecutor. I hope you've recognized me. I'm the Journalist. We've met before, many times.

FLY: Here we go again. He's a very well-known journalist, I've seen him plenty of times, always on TV. His smiling face is on buses, on underground carriages, posters in the streets. As if it wasn't enough to see him everywhere I fly, now he absolutely has to turn up here. *[Continues its self-destructive attempts to get out of the room.]* Buzz, buzz, buzz!

PROSECUTOR: Oh, yes, sure, and if you've come with the same problem, please don't bother, I know pretty well what you are going to say. The Citizen and the Judge here have been impelled to come with the same sense – the feeling of fear and persecution.

JOURNALIST: But I'd like to tell you how I came to this point...

PROSECUTOR: No need! Thank you, gentlemen. Now, I'd like to ask you to leave my room. As you can see, it needs to be cleaned.

JOURNALIST: Yes, but...

PROSECUTOR: I'm obliged to ask you to leave! We don't arrest innocent people. However, for future reference, we are going to keep in mind your clearly negative attitude towards the government in place. Trust me, you will be duly visited.

CITIZEN: I'm not going to budge!

JUDGE: Neither am I! And if it's the matter of trust, may you do your duty! I can't stand anymore! My poor old heart can't take it any longer. I'm the Second World War veteran and can tell you I've never been so scared in my life! Even at the front-line, facing the Nazi! Who are you anyway to keep us so terrified?

JOURNALIST: Before I entered the room... You know, your loud conversation carries down the corridor. Your employees, Mr Prosecutor, yes, all your employees are

eavesdropping at the door. Just like you've guessed my reasons for coming here, they must have also guessed. But that's not really important...

PROSECUTOR: Why should they eavesdrop? I'm not breaking any laws. And why should I believe you? I've got a perfect reputation, I always comply with the authorities. Ever ready to do as asked, whether right or wrong. Why should they listen to what I say? You're a famous journalist with millions of people taking heed of what you've got to say, but, sorry to be so straightforward, I don't trust you.

JOURNALIST: I'm a poster! The governmental poster! You trust me because my words justify your violence, because you seek justification of your wrongdoing in my coverage. Why don't you ask me if I've got any respect left? See, no one reacts because I'm a poster, a loudspeaker, a walking propaganda! I'm not a journalist, rather an amplifier for the dictatorship, or its apologist. That's who I am! And that's why I've come. My only chance of saving my consciousness and career is my confession!

JUDGE [*to Prosecutor*]: It shows he's a journalist, doesn't it?

CITIZEN [*to Prosecutor*]: What did he think of when he wrote all those political pamphlets? What was his reasoning when he wholeheartedly supported the dictatorship and praised the authorities?

JUDGE [*to Citizen*]: We have to show empathy. We're all in the same boat.

PROSECUTOR: By now the entire Ministry knows there are three people in my office: the Citizen who's guilty of eating left-over buns, the Judge who sympathizes with criminals and the famous Journalist who believes he's a poster.

JOURNALIST: I've always put my trust in the Prosecutor's Office.

PROSECUTOR: Just for the record: do you, Mr Journalist, also demand to be immediately arrested like these two gentlemen here?

JOURNALIST: Does it need asking?

PROSECUTOR: And what do you suggest I should record as your accusation?

JOURNALIST: That I don't want to be commissioned by the government, that my guilt is my desire to defend freedom of speech.

PROSECUTOR: With all respect, I can't file that. Shouldn't you also try to get into my shoes? Our country declares freedom of speech. Of course it's another issue to what extent the declaration is met. In any case, the West knows we're heading towards Democracy.

CITIZEN [*to Prosecutor*]: And is the West aware that our citizens fear to speak openly?

PROSECUTOR [*to Journalist*]: Listen, we have to keep in mind that the state interests are much higher than anything else. We are part of a big political game and a couple of occasional victims are permissible. The EU and the NATO are our true priorities, while you want me to record that human rights are being violated. Are you in your right minds? My final speech is read not only by the judge – it's studied and analysed by various international organizations. Their opinion is extremely important for our country! Don't you realize we're trying to build a state? What we had earlier wasn't a real state, it was nothing. You need to realize that the state is more significant than its people. That's how it should be at the initial stage. People should gradually get used to law and order, as they used to live in absolute commotion and hopelessness. We have to sacrifice this much for the grand aim, so that our children live in a strong, stable state!

JUDGE: Mr Prosecutor, you must remember that it'll be your turn soon. You'll be judged in the same way as those thousands of innocent people. The dictatorship doesn't differentiate between its own and the others.

CITIZEN: Especially that everyone around knows perfectly well who is who.

JOURNALIST: State your accusations!

PROSECUTOR: I'd like to ask myself three questions, can I? [*He walks up and down the room. A short pause.*] The first question is: Who am I? No, no, I don't expect an answer. The second question: What happened to my credo? And the third is: What's going on? [*A short pause.*] And as I can't answer any of these questions, it seems the situation is critical... Can it be that my office is also bugged?

JUDGE: I'd say even more – you're being watched.

PROSECUTOR: If they listen and watch me, it means I can easily end in the defendant's place!

JOURNALIST: So what? Have you never seen arrested prosecutors? As a rule, they're kept in jail next to those they've put behind bars themselves.

PROSECUTOR: Yes, but I've been doing what *they* wanted me to!

JUDGE: We all do what *they* ask us to.

PROSECUTOR: What do you suggest I should do?

CITIZEN: What we started with: arrest us!

JOURNALIST: Arrest us here and now, immediately!

JUDGE: You've got all the necessary power.

PROSECUTOR: It can't go on like this! It's absolutely impossible! I can't live under the constant stress and such dread! My health won't allow me. What can I do? If I arrest you, who's going to arrest me?

CITIZEN: You could go to another prosecutor, explain the problem, tell him you're scared, that sooner or later you'll be arrested anyway, so you decided to give yourself up just to put an end to the unbearable sense of fear.

JUDGE: Take my word, it's the best you can do.

PROSECUTOR: Suppose that prosecutor will also decide he wants to be arrested having heard my confession.

CITIZEN: A very likely development.

PROSECUTOR: And then should he also seek another prosecutor so that he is likewise arrested?

JUDGE: But it's essential that you are arrested in the first place.

PROSECUTOR: And if we think logically, isn't it possible that the entire Ministry is gripped by terror and everyone decides to free from the unbearable sense of dread?

CITIZEN: Everyone's already fearful, so don't you fear that.

PROSECUTOR [*to Judge*]: And could it happen that all prisons are filled to their capacity with the innocent people, which means there'll be no place for everyone?

JUDGE: Do you ask me? The prisons have been pretty crowded for some time and you know it as well as I do.

[There is a knock on the door.]

PROSECUTOR: Let's lock ourselves in, not open to anyone and stay in a prison of our own.

JOURNALIST: I'd have never imagined I'd be freer in jail than out of it.

CITIZEN: Lock the door! They'll probably burst in and liberate us.

PROSECUTOR: Push the tables and chairs against it so that even a fly isn't able to get in or out!

JUDGE: Quick! Move fast!

JOURNALIST: We need to be faster than them! The table!

JUDGE: Here, take this chair! Prop the door!

[The heavy wooden table is moved to block the door. Chairs are piled on top of the table. Another knock on the door.]

LAMARA *[from behind the door]*: Open the door! I need to clean the room!

PROSECUTOR: Sh! Quiet, everyone!

[Everyone gets quiet in the room. Silence.]

LAMARA *[from behind the door]*: Open up! It's getting late, I want to go home. How can I leave you in this filth?

PROSECUTOR: It's Lamara, the cleaner.

JUDGE: Looks like a provocation.

CITIZEN: She must have been sent.

JOURNALIST: They think we'll be fooled.

PROSECUTOR: We mustn't react. Come on, let's push the bookcase.

[The noise resumes as instantly as it stopped. The bookcase is moved to block the door.]

JUDGE: Let's stay inside and not let anyone in.

CITIZEN *[joyfully]*: We're in jail!

JOURNALIST *[joyfully]*: We're arrested!

PROSECUTOR: You're God sent indeed!

LAMARA *[from behind the door]*: What's wrong with you? Open up or I'm off! You can stay in that deep shit if you want!

[No one answers her. The four self-proclaimed inmates are breathing laboriously, anticipating a police raid any minute. No one utters a word.]

LAMARA *[from behind the door]*: So that's how you want it, ha? Fine! I'll never set my foot in there, ever!

PROSECUTOR: They're going to burst in, but the door's pretty solid, it's going to hold.

CITIZEN: I'm not afraid of anything!

JOURNALIST: Let's see how they manage to get in!

[Their nervousness is caught by the Fly, which doubles its efforts to escape, in a completely self-destructive way.]

FLY: Open the window, please, please! Let me out! Please let me go back to my poor wife and children! I promise never to come back. I'll hold their wings and get as far away from here as possible! Anywhere, to hell itself – but, please, open this window! *[It hits the glass pane with all its strength.]* Buzz, buzz, buzz!

Fade out.

