

MARC. No, no, I'm trying to explain, I'm apologizing.

SERGE. Apologizing? What for?

MARC. I'm too thin-skinned, I'm too high-strung, I over-react ... You could say, I lack judgment.

SERGE. Read Seneca.

MARC. That's it. See, for instance, you say "read Seneca" and I could easily have gotten annoyed. I'm quite capable of being really annoyed by your saying to me in the course of our conversation, "read Seneca." Which is absurd of me!

SERGE. No. It's not absurd.

MARC. Really?

SERGE. No, because you thought you could identify ...

MARC. I didn't say I *was* annoyed ...

SERGE. You said you could easily ...

MARC. Yes, yes. I could easily ...

SERGE. Get annoyed, and I understand that. Because when I said "read Seneca," you thought you could identify a kind of superiority. You tell me you lack judgment and my answer is "read Seneca," well, it's obnoxious!

MARC. It is a little.

SERGE. Having said that, it's true you lack judgment, because I didn't say "read Seneca," I said "read Seneca!"

MARC. You're right. You're right.

SERGE. The fact of the matter is, you've quite simply lost your sense of humor.

MARC. Probably.

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SERGE. You've lost your sense of humor, Marc. You really have lost your sense of humor. When I was talking to Yvan the other day, we agreed you'd lost your sense of humor. Where the hell is he? He's incapable of being on time, it's infuriating! We'll miss the beginning!

MARC. ... Yvan thinks I've lost my sense of humor? ...

SERGE. Yvan agrees with me that recently you've somewhat lost your sense of humor.

MARC. The last time you saw each other, Yvan said he liked your painting very much and I'd lost my sense of humor ...

SERGE. Oh yes, that, yes, the painting, really, very much. And he meant it ... What's that you're eating?

MARC. Ignatia.  
SERGE. Oh, you believe in homeopathy now?  
MARC. I don't believe in anything.  
SERGE. Didn't you think Yvan had lost a lot of weight?  
MARC. So's she.  
SERGE. It's the wedding, eating away at them.  
MARC. Yes. (*They laugh.*)  
SERGE. How's Paula?  
MARC. All right. (*He indicates the Antrios.*) Where are you going to put it?  
SERGE. Haven't decided. There. Or there? ... Too ostentatious.  
MARC. Are you going to have it framed? (*Serge laughs discreetly.*)  
SERGE. No! ... No, no ...  
MARC. Why not?  
SERGE. It's not supposed to be framed.  
MARC. Is that right?  
SERGE. The artist doesn't want it to be. It mustn't be interrupted. It's already in its setting. (*He signals Marc over to examine the edge.*) Look ... you see ...  
MARC. What is it, adhesive tape?  
SERGE. No, it's a kind of Kraft paper ... Made up by the artist.  
MARC. It's funny the way you say the artist.  
SERGE. What else am I supposed to say?  
MARC. You say the artist when you could say the painter or ... whatever his name is ... Antrios ...  
SERGE. So?  
MARC. But you say the artist, as if he's some sort of ... well, anyway, doesn't matter. What are we seeing tonight? Let's try and see a movie with a little substance for once.  
SERGE. It's eight o'clock. Everything will have started. I can't imagine how this man, who has nothing whatsoever to do — am I right? — manages to be late every single time. Where the fuck is he?  
MARC. Let's just eat dinner.  
SERGE. All right. It's five after eight. We said we'd meet between seven and half-past ... What d'you mean, the way I say the artist?  
MARC. Nothing. I was going to say something stupid.

SERGE. Well, go on.

MARC. You say the artist as if ... as if he's some unattainable being. The artist ... some sort of god ... (*Serge laughs.*)

SERGE. Well, for me, he is a god! You don't think I'd have forked out a fortune for a mere mortal! ...

MARC. Well, no.

SERGE. I went to the Pompidou on Monday, you know how many Antrioses they have at the Pompidou? ... Three! Three Antrioses! ... At the Pompidou!

MARC. Amazing.

SERGE. And mine's as good as any of them! If not better! ... Listen, I have a suggestion, let's give Yvan exactly three more minutes and then get the hell out of here. I've found a great new place. Lyonnaise food.

MARC. Why are you so jumpy?

SERGE. I'm not jumpy.

MARC. Yes, you are jumpy.

SERGE. I am not jumpy, all right, I'm jumpy, I'm jumpy because this slackness is intolerable, this inability to practice any kind of self-discipline!

MARC. The fact is, I'm getting on your nerves and you're taking it out on poor Yvan.

SERGE. What do you mean, poor Yvan, are you shitting me? You're not getting on my nerves, why should you be getting on my nerves?

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SERGE. He is getting on my nerves. It's true.

He's getting on my nerves.

It's this ingratiating tone of voice. A little smile behind every word.

It's as if he's forcing himself to be pleasant. Don't be pleasant, whatever you do, don't be pleasant!

Could it be the Antrios? ... Could buying the Antrios have triggered this feeling of constraint between us?

Buying something ... without his approval?

Well, screw his approval! Screw your approval, Marc!

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