

ANDREA PASS
VANISHING SENSES

drama

ACTOR / ROLES

Szabolcs Hajdu	Endre (man in his forties)
Kata Pető	Anna (woman in her forties, Endre's wife)
Andrea Petrik	Nóri (Endre and Anna's 15-year-old daughter)
Adrienn Réti	Female Doctor, Maja (Nóri's best friend), Klári (Endre's colleague), Teacher, Vica (hairstylist)
Márton Pallag	Male Nurse, CJ (Nóri's boyfriend), Strange Figure
Pál Kárpáti	Visitor, Stigma (Nóri's friend), Editor-in-Chief, Papa (hospital patient), Ferenc (Endre's colleague), Wild Duck

Directed: Andrea Pass

Budapest, Trafó House of Contemporary Arts

Two scenes from the play

The florescent light flashes and begins to hum. Endre goes toward it. There is a chair below the florescent tube.

Behind Endre, the Strange Figure enters (earlier the Male Nurse played by Márton Pallag). He's wearing exactly the same clothes as Endre. He has a sports bag on his shoulder and a large soup bowl in his hands. For a while, he follows Endre, then he goes to the table and sets down the bowl. He is about to eat soup from it when Endre notices him.

Scene 4.

Endre: Who are you?

S. Figure: *(looks over himself)* Whoo, if we're not dressed alike! *(points behind himself)*
The bedroom's that way.

Endre: What do you want here?

S. Figure: To check out the lights.

The Strange Figure goes to a light under which Endre is standing. He holds out the sports bag to the man.

S. Figure: It's no wonder you got lost in this half-light. *(gestures to the flickering florescent tube)* No money to replace them, I'm afraid. Though that's one thing I can really under... *(the word doesn't come to mind)* Under... under... under...
Hm! It was on the tip of my tongue... And such a simple word. Not "accept", but... Help me out!

Endre: "Understand"?

S. Figure: Thank you kindly! *(steps up on the chair to reach the florescent tube)* So I can understand there's no money for it.

He snaps at Endre, who removes a screwdriver from the sports bag and hands it over to the Strange Figure.

S. Figure: Just think of it! How many florescent tubes in one hospital? Or in a single hospital... oh, there I go again. *(searches for the word)* Long, narrow... What you're standing in!

Endre: Corridor?

S. Figure: Corridor! *(the light flashes)* But it's no use my changing the flickering tubes.

The flashing stops.

S. Figure: Right away another one goes out.

The florescent clock on the wall goes out.

S. Figure: Well, here in Neurology, anyway, we don't talk politics.

He snaps at Endre, who removes a wallet from the bag and hands it to the Strange Figure.

S. Figure: Even less the ones that got strokes or, you know, magnificent... magnification...
No, don't help me... *(tries again)* MA – LIG – NAN – CIES. *(the word echoes a long time)* I mean, once they're at stage four, what do they care? Think about it, Endre. *(he removes Endre's identification from his wallet and pockets it)*
When they tell you, "Sir, you're going to die," what's your biggest problem?
That the lights are flickering? Or that you haven't believed enough?

Endre reaches for his wallet. When he touches the figure, it's as though he receives an electric shock. Meanwhile, the Strange Figure tries to say the word "believed" again."

S. Figure BEEEEEE-**LIVED!** Though I suppose those informed of their death would be less hung up, strung up, and stressed out than people who don't know. Me, for example. *(steps down from chair)* I could die any time.

The Strange Figure suddenly collapses. Endre catches him.

The acting space very gradually goes dark while the florescent buzz grows stronger.

We tend to forget that. Or we get hung up, strung up over it in secret. 'Cuz it just comes to mind. That one day we'll simply go out. And we'll be all alone.
Or with others, but still alone. Let's say in the dark.

The Strange Figure removes a coffee cup from his pocket. He drops in two cubes of sugar and mixes it with a teaspoon. As he raises the cup to his mouth, the stage and auditorium are plunged in complete darkness.

Or in hospice. Oppressed. Captured. Curtained. I'll see you in the papers.

The florescent buzz becomes increasingly loud, supplemented by the band, until the noise is practically ear-splitting.

Scene 5.

It is bright suddenly. Anna is setting the table for Sunday lunch. Music plays softly on the radio. Endre stands on the chair beneath the florescent light, looking around alarmed. Then, his attention is caught by the soup bowl on the table.

Anna: What is it, honey? Looking for something?

Endre: *(steps down from the chair)* Is Nóri up?

Anna: I don't know. Call her. *(cautiously)* You don't want to speak to her now, do you?

Endre: About what?

Anna: ... That she drank a little...

Endre suddenly sets off for Nóri's bedroom.

Anna: *(following him)* I'll have a talk with her... I'm glad you're getting along again!

Nóri enters.

Nóri: Is lunch ready? *(crosses to the table)* We're having beef broth?

Anna: Sure thing. Your father brought you a coconut bon-bon.

The parents cross to the table. They all sit.

Nóri: When does the match start?

Apa: Four. Are you coming?

Nóri shakes her head no.

Apa: I understand. A bunch of old men like me chasing a football.

Nóri: Then why do you want me to come?

Apa: You used to love football. ... And who knows if you'll ever see your father running about again?

Pause.

Nóri: Why say that now?

Apa: What?

Nóri: Who knows if I'll ever see you running again.

Endre: ... I have no idea why I said it.

Pause.

Nóri: I'm sorry, but I've got to study. I have to write a sort story for Hungarian class.

Anna: About what?

Nóri: Whatever we want.

Endre: And what will you write about?

Nóri: A hunting dog who loses his sense of smell and gets totally depressed over it.

Endre: *(surprised)* That's really good! How did you think of it?

Nóri: Maja told me her father can't notice smells. They say it's all in his head.

Anna: Poor thing...

Endre: And then what happens?

Nóri: *(shyly, as she narrates, she doesn't dare look at her father)* Well, he meets a wild duck, who he doesn't want to hunt, because he doesn't catch its scent, and so he has no hunting instinct. It turns out the duck can help him, because it's magic, but then the dog has to give up some other sense. He goes through a big dilemma over which one. He doesn't want to be deaf, since he wouldn't hear so many beautiful sounds. And for the same reason, he doesn't want to be blind... It's a little sappy. I still don't know how it'll end.

Anna: Happy ending! He gets back his sense of smell without losing anything.

Endre: That's it? At least, he could eat the duck in the end!

Nóri: That's a god idea. Thanks.

Endre: You're welcome. And what's the dog's name?

Nóri: Verdi.

Endre: Verdi?

Nóri: Uh-huh. His owner's a musician.

Endre: Why not a bolder name like Shostakovich?

Nóri: I don't think so. That's forced.

Endre: No, Bartók would be forced.

Anna: I like Verdi.

Endre: *(thinks about it)* It's a great idea! A dog that's musically refined and loves classical musical gets depressed.

Nóri: That's not exactly how I imagined it, but this is good...

Endre: *(eagerly)* Of course, it's good. And when the moment comes to decide which sense to give up, some very moving classical music plays...

Nóri: Bolero.

Anna: Sure, Bolero!

Endre: *(to Anna)* Well, not something as cliché as Bolero, *(to Nóri)* but something similar. More and more instruments, extreme shifts in the dynamics... There's a piece that's all constant modulation.

Nóri: What's that?

Endre: When the melody changes key. *(with increasing enthusiasm)* So as the music modulates, step by step... *(gets stuck)* step by step... step by step... unlocking the secret... secret...

Anna: Doors?

Endre: ...chambers of his soul, filling it with joy and extreme bliss...

Nóri: The dog's soul? *(laughs)*

Endre: No, it's really good. Believe me! It's like this feeling fills him and lifts him off the ground like a helium balloon...

Nóri: It's great, dad. The only problem is that it's homework for Hungarian class.

Endre: I still think you could write it. Try!

Nóri: Okay...

They eat.

Endre: I'm really glad you're buckling down and studying.

Anna: She works hard... Only she's a little bit in love right now.

Nóri: Ah, Mom...!

Anna: You can tell him.

Pause.

Endre: Oh, so that's why you're not coming to the match? ... Do you have a date with someone this afternoon?

Silence.

Endre: And? Who is the ... individual? What can we know about him?

Nóri: *(stares straight ahead)* How can you ask that?

Endre: Excuse me. I won't ask anything.

Anna subtly signals to Nóri that she should speak with her father.

Nóri: *(with great difficulty at first)* His name's CJ. He's 18. He has a little brother and a band.

Endre: Eighteen years old?

Nóri: Eighteen years old!

Anna: *(quickly changing the topic)* And what music does CJ play?

Nóri: Rap.

Endre is silent.

Nóri: Is that a problem? ... Have you heard any real rap?

Endre: I've seen it, too. Misguided little idiots on tops of cars, waving guns, and every second word is bleeped out.

Anna: I'm certain CJ's songs are not like that.

Endre: *(asks Nóri)* Really? What are they about?

Nóri: Lots of things.

Endre: For example?

Nóri: *(stubbornly)* That they have dreams they want to achieve, and they want to break out of the ghetto.

Anna: Why? Where does CJ live?

Nóri: The Aladár Bán housing estate.

Endre continues eating.

Nóri: They're not gypsies, if that's what you're panicked about. Just poor.

Silence. Endre does not react.

Nóri: Now what? Before it was blacks, now it's the gypsies... You're supposed to be this hyper-radical freethinker...

Anna: You know your father's very open-minded. That's why he's interested...

Endre: What's the name of the band?

Silence.

Endre: No name?

Nóri: Warning Shotz.

Anna: And what's that?

Nóri: Shooting in the air to warn people.

Endre: Warn them about what?

Nóri: Nothing.

Endre: Then how did they get the name?

Nóri does not answer.

Endre: There must be a reason. Because it sounds good? They're trying to identify with gangsters this way? That's how they plan to bust out of the ghetto?

Nóri: Oh, because "Global" is a much better name, right?

Endre: Right.

Nóri: You're dead wrong.

Endre: You think so?

Nóri: Yes.

Endre: You're not going anywhere this afternoon.

Nóri: What?

Endre: Later, if your grades improve. And you don't have to show off in those pants down to your knees.

Anna: Endre...

Endre: I allowed her, didn't I? I should get something in return! Let's say, you should talk to me normally sometimes.

Nóri: We're talking now!

Endre: And not just when you're drunk!

Nóri: I'm not even drunk! *(begins to leave)*

Endre: You stay here!

Nóri: The hell I will!

Endre goes after her and grabs Nóri's arm.

Endre: I said, stay here and eat your lunch!

Nóri: I'm done. You can eat the coconut bon-bon yourself.

Anna: Stop this, both of you!

Endre: Sit down! You're not going anywhere this afternoon!

Nóri: Get fucked!

Endre slaps Nóri, and she strikes him in return. Silence.

Endre: You hit back?

Nóri: I hate you! *(screams)* I despise you! You're smothering me! I can't breathe around you!

As Nóri rushes out of the swinging door, Maja arrives with the same momentum. She can feel that there is something wrong. Silence.