

At rise: The room is dimly lit. SHANE is seated in a chair, downstage C, holding his head in his hands. TATYANA paces back and forth, upstage. After a while, she stops and appears to peer out of a window, as if looking for something or someone. SHANE turns and observes her.

SHANE
Any sign?

(pause.)

TATYANA
Nothing.

SHANE
(rubbing his face in his hands)
Where the fuck is he?

(pause)

TATYANA
I'm beginning to wonder if they haven't–

SHANE
Shut up! Don't! Don't even think it. We can't afford to.

TATYANA
He was careless. He was stupid. They could have easily–

SHANE
I said, shut it!

(beat)

SHANE covers his face with his face hands again.

TATYANA

Yes, yes, bury your head in your hands – in the sand. But when you pull them away, the reality will still be there...waiting for you....for us both.

SHANE

I just need to think, that's all.

TATYANA

About what?

SHANE

About what we do...if he doesn't show up.

TATYANA

What's there to think about? If he doesn't show up...we're dead.

SHANE

No!

SHANE leaps from his chair and crosses to TATYANA, grabbing her roughly by the shoulders.

SHANE

Listen to me, Tatyana, and listen good! He'll be here. I know he will. Something's happened. Something's screwed up his timing. But he'll be here. I know it.

(beat)

And if he isn't...if he's...then we'll...change plans.

TATYANA

To what? There are no others. It all depends on him.

SHANE

No it doesn't! We still have options.

(beat)

I just...

SHANE returns to the chair and rubs his head in hands once more.

TATYANA

Look, this is a one-way street. You knew the risks when you got into this. If you don't have the guts to follow through when things go wrong, then you should

TATYANA (Cont'd)

never have got involved to begin with. This operation can't afford people like you.

SHANE

Hey, it's not my fault he hasn't shown up. It's no good blaming me.

TATYANA

No one's blaming anyone. But if you can't keep your head in a crisis you shouldn't be in this business.

SHANE

It's keeping my head I'm concerned about. Now, instead of just standing there criticizing, why don't you try and help figure out how we're gonna get out of this mess if he doesn't show up.

TATYANA

He's not showing up.

SHANE

A real optimist, you are, aren't you?

(beat)

TATYANA

I think I've figured it out.

SHANE

Figured what out?

TATYANA

This. Us. All of this...perpetual waiting.

SHANE

What's to figure out? We're waiting for him to show up, that's all.

TATYANA

But I told you...he's not showing up.

SHANE

Not yet.

TATYANA

He's not showing up because he was never intended to show up.

TATYANA (Cont'd)

(beat)
It's all a set up.

(beat)

What are you talking about?
SHANE

Us. This. We've been set up.
TATYANA

By...by who?
SHANE

I'll give you one guess.
TATYANA

(beat)

I don't...I've no idea.
SHANE

(beat)

The playwright.
TATYANA

(incredulous)
What?
SHANE

You heard me.
TATYANA

But...that's insane.
SHANE

TATYANA
Is it? Think about it. Think about how neatly the last scene was resolved – how the scene following this one starts from an entirely different plot point.

SHANE
That doesn't mean anything.

TATYANA

No? Then why are we never mentioned again for the rest of the play?

SHANE

That's not true. We are. We are mentioned.

TATYANA

Near the end in a brief aside from a minor character to tie up a loose thread, that's all. The quick disposal of a thin subplot that was never intended to go anywhere in the first place.

SHANE

No...no, you've got it all wrong.

TATYANA

Shane, listen to me, this scene is completely unnecessary to the overall arc of the story. You know it and I know it. It neither propels the play forward nor adds anything of value to the central plot.

SHANE

And you...you really believe this?

TATYANA

I've had my suspicions for some time, but tonight...tonight the final pieces of the puzzle fell into place. You see, I'd often wondered why our characters were brought back from scene three in such a seemingly random and superfluous way. And tonight it hit me.

SHANE

What did?

TATYANA

This entire scene – this completely meaningless waiting game – was added after he'd completed the original script.

SHANE

No!

TATYANA

I'm guessing somewhere around the third or fourth draft.

SHANE

But why? Why on earth would he do that?