Marc and Serge Audition Duologue

*Context: This excerpt starts about a third of the way into Marc and Serge’s first conversation since Serge initially showed Marc the painting. They began trying to put things right, but it went downhill fast after Marc took offense to Serge telling him he ought to read Seneca. The harsh truths about what they have been feeling since Serge bought the Antrios (and beneath the surface long before) are beginning to emerge.*

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

Marc Probably.

Serge You've lost your sense of humour, Marc. You really have lost your sense of humour, old chap. When I was talking to Yvan the other day, we agreed you'd lost your sense of humour. 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 humour? …

Serge Yvan agrees with me that recently you've somewhat lost your sense of humour.

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

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. Where are you going to put it?

Serge Haven't decided. There. Or there? … Too ostentatious.

Marc Are you going have it framed?

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. Look… you see…

Marc What is it, Elastoplast?

Serge No, it's kind of Kraft paper… Made up by the artist.

Marc It's funny the way you say 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 a sort of… Well, anyway, doesn't matter. What are we seeing? Let's try and see something with a bit of 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 have dinner.

Serge All right. It's five past eight. We said we’d meet between seven and half-past… What d’you mean, the way I say 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 Well, for me, he is a god! You don't think I’d have forked out a fortune from mere mortal! …

Marc I see.

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 bugger off. I found a very good new place. Lyonnaise.

Marc Why are you so jumpy?

Serge I'm not jumpy.

Marc Yes, you are jumpy.

Serge I am not jumpy, well, I am, 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 an out on poor Yvan.

Serge What do you mean, poor Yvan. Are you taking the piss? You're not getting on my nerves, why should you be getting on my nerves?

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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.