

ACT IV: ZEUS STORY

Characters

PETRA, 25-35, female--composed, demure, and proper
JERRY, male--confident, suave, and persuasive
THIEF, male

Costumes

Petra and Jerry wear the standard business attire--formal and casual, respectively--of the future. Petra carries a large bag. Thief wears the worn and scruffy castoffs of seasons past.

Time

20 years from now, give or take.

Setting

Two beat-up, old-style wooden park benches, facing each other at an angle, one with a slat missing. A sleek "futuristic" trash can with the broken end of the bench slat protruding.

PETRA enters with a large bag over her shoulder, sipping a beverage. She crosses to the undamaged bench and sits. She removes a lunch container and a helmet from the bag, which she sets carelessly on the ground beside her. She dons the helmet, lowering an opaque visor that blocks the top half of her face. Small colored lights on the helmet blink to indicate that it's active. PETRA settles in comfortably to eat and engage with the helmet's program, which requires her to make occasional small hand gestures in the air above her lap while she feeds herself under the visor.

After a few moments, THIEF enters. He appraises PETRA for a few moments before approaching her stealthily from behind. Carefully, silently he reaches out toward her bag, grabs it and flees. PETRA turns with alarm, removing her helmet as she rises.

PETRA

Oh! Stop! Stop him! Please help! That's my bag!

JERRY enters, blocking THIEF's exit. They grapple clumsily. JERRY decks THIEF with a wild punch and sends him off empty-handed with an amateurish kick. JERRY returns PETRA's bag.

JERRY

(Winded.)

Yours, I believe.

PETRA takes the bag, feverishly checking the contents.

PETRA

Oh, thank you, thank you.

JERRY

All there?

PETRA

Yes, I think so.

PETRA returns to the bench, where she sits, quite drained. JERRY follows.

JERRY

You ok?

PETRA

Yes. Oh, I'm so grateful. I don't know what I would've done if you hadn't come along.

JERRY

Glad I did.

PETRA

Oh. I'm so... forgive me. I have to catch my breath.

JERRY

(Beat.)

Place sure has changed.

PETRA

Pardon?

JERRY

The park. Used to be you could sit here any time, day or night, without fear.

PETRA
I'm not afraid. I was just... startled.

JERRY
Of course.

PETRA
I carry protection.

PETRA pulls her bag close as if realizing her knight is yet another stranger.

PETRA (CONT'D)
I mean, I'm... armed.

JERRY sits on the second bench.

JERRY
Smart. Can't be too careful.
(Beat.)
That's why you might reconsider wearing that, that--

JERRY spins a finger in the air.

JERRY (CONT'D)
--game cap in public.

PETRA
I forgot to turn on the proximity alarm. That was stupid.

JERRY
No, no. It says something about you. You're a trusting person.

PETRA pulls a compact baton out of her bag.

PETRA
Even though I also carry a shock stick?

JERRY
Well, what's the expression--trust but electrify?

They laugh. The tension eases.

JERRY (CONT'D)
Still, you think the best of people until proven otherwise.
That's admirable.

PETRA
I suppose.

JERRY

Unfortunately in the process you also risk becoming desensitized to danger.

PETRA

I don't know about that.

JERRY

Maybe that creep did you a favor.

PETRA

Huh?

JERRY

I bet you'll remember to use the cap's alarm from now on.

PETRA

You can be sure I will.

JERRY

Yeah, it's good to be reminded of your vulnerability once in a while. Keeps you on your toes.

PETRA

This bag has all my personal stuff. You saved me a great deal of trouble. Thank you.

JERRY

You're welcome.

PETRA

Have you ever had to cancel all your exchanges and cloud new ones?

JERRY

Takes years.

PETRA

Then you have to pay someone to keep checking your webspoor, like every day, forever.

JERRY

A nightmare. An absolute nightmare.

PETRA

Once someone rode my ID for a whole week. Cost me... a lot. Asshole.

(Beat, dismayed.)

Oh, I'm sorry.

JERRY laughs.

PETRA (CONT'D)

I don't usually talk like that.

JERRY

Sometimes no other word will do.

PETRA

It's just, you know, with the bureaucrats and all their... bullshit, criminals seem to suffer less than their victims.

JERRY

Ain't that the truth.

PETRA

(Giggles.)

I guess I sound like quite the potty mouth.

JERRY

No, no, you're plain-spoken. It's a refreshing quality.

A pause, which PETRA fills by rearranging her belongings...

JERRY (CONT'D)

My name's Jerry, by the way.

PETRA

Petra.

JERRY

Nice place for lunch, isn't it? Except for the occasional purse-snatching asshole.

PETRA

Yes, it's usually very peaceful.

JERRY

What's the game?

PETRA

I'm sorry... ?

JERRY

You were totally absorbed in your game cap. What were you playing?

PETRA

Oh, just a sim.

JERRY

Maybe I heard of it.

PETRA

I doubt it. It's not a typical man thing.

JERRY

What's a "typical man thing"?