

Excerpt:

Blindness

By Jose Saramago
Adapted for the stage by Jodi Kanter
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Dramatis Personae

First Blind Man (FBM)
Thief (Thief)
Doctor (Doc)
Boy w/ squint (Boy)
Man w/ Black Eyepatch (Patch)
Sargeant 2 (S2) / Hoodlum 2 (H2)
Dog of Tears (Dog)

Girl w/ Dark Glasses (Girl)
Doctor's Wife (DW)
First Blind Man's Wife (1W)
Sargeant 1 (S1) / Hoodlum 1 (H1)

The Minister (primarily a computerized video image)

The two sergeants also play the two hoodlums. Some additional roles may be doubled.

Set Requirements

7 beds. May be 3 bunk beds and palette on floor for boy.

ACT I

BLINDNESS

Scene 1

At rise, the actors are scattered throughout the theater in various playing areas, some on stage, some in the balconies, some in the audience. The scenes are delineated spatially and with props, but not with multiple sets. One exception to this may be a lamp suggesting the Doctor's apartment, which may reappear in the second act when we see this space in its entirety.

The first scene alternates between dialogue and frantic movement, with the characters switching positions in the theater. The effect is of a game of musical chairs in which everybody ultimately loses.

FIRST BLIND MAN

The first man is sitting in traffic when it happens. The light turns green, but his car does not move.

THIEF

There must be a problem with the suspension,

DOCTOR

or jammed brakes,

PATCH

or a breakdown in the electric circuit,

DOCTOR'S WIFE

unless he has simply run out of gas.

FBM

Just my luck.

ALL

The cars behind him frantically sound their horns.

GIRL

Some of us have jobs, mister. We have to get to work.

DW

The man inside turns his head first to one side then the other. Finally, he looks straight ahead of himself. He is screaming without sound

THIEF

But what can clearly be seen through the windshield are three words:

ALL [whispered]

I am blind.

1W

The composer is alone when it happens.

GIRL

The browns and yellows of late autumn are falling quickly across the window behind her piano.

1W

*Hush little baby, don't say a word
Mama's gonna buy you a mockingbird...*

DW

In front of her is a blank sheet of music, on which she is trying to inscribe the first notes of a new chorale.

1W

And if that mockingbird don't sing...

GIRL

Beginnings are the hardest. She sings a children's song to herself, as she often does when she's starting

DW

to remind herself that the notes don't have to be difficult to be haunting.

1W

And if that looking glass gets broke...

DW

She has been staring at the whiteness of the page for a long time. So long, in fact, that she hardly notices

GIRL

when the pen on her paper

DW

and the hand that is holding it

GIRL and DW

both simultaneously turn white.

1W

I am blind.

FBM

I am blind!

PATCH

The man with the black eyepatch is also alone when it happens.

DW

He is sitting on the small chair in the corner of the small room where he lives,

DOC

and he suddenly feels that something is wrong with his blind eye.

All ensemble members mirror Patch's movements through following two lines.

GIRL

It feels as if the inside of the socket is inflamed, and he removes the patch to satisfy his curiosity. Just at that moment

PATCH

his seeing eye goes blind.

BOY

The boy with the squint is at the amusement park when it happens.

GIRL

One minute he is riding up and down on a brightly painted pony.

DOC

The next moment the pony is white.

GIRL

He does not know where he is or where all the people have gone.

DW

He knows only one thing:

BOY

I want my mommy!

FMB

I am blind!

1W

I am blind.

BOY

I want my mommy!

GIRL

She lights and smokes a cigarette through part of what follows.

The girl with dark glasses will be in bed when it happens. Not in her own bed. Not in a bed where she had ever lain before. But a bed that is familiar to her, all the same. She will be wearing her glasses, as she always does, since she believes that dark glasses give her an air of alluring mystery. Dark glasses and smoking, but after all one can only do so many things with one's hands. For the moment, all she is doing is opening the front door of the hotel. She expects that today's encounter will be profitable in more ways than one.

DOC

The doctor is asleep when it happens.

ALL

In his fitful sleep, he dreams of blindness;

BOY

the blindness of a boy with a squint,

GIRL

a girl with dark glasses,

PATCH

a man with an eyepatch.

DW

The blindness of all these patients who had sat in his waiting room the day before in varying states of panic

DOC

but never of his own.

DW

Yet when he awakes from these unsettling dreams with a start, he too is blind.

DOC

Because he is a doctor, however, he refuses to surrender to despair.

BOY

He lies awake for hours on end.

GIRL

He hopes the night will never end rather than have to announce to his wife,

PATCH

he whose profession is to cure ailments in the eyes of others,

DOC

I'm blind.

Doctor goes to "sink" and begins shaving. Periodically, he cuts himself and cries out. Through the rest of the scene, those ensemble members not actively in scene step rhythmically in place, keeping pace with the Girl with Dark Glasses' story.

GIRL

She steps inside the hotel elevator, presses the button for the third floor, walks to room three hundred and twelve and discreetly knocks on the door. Ten minutes later, she is naked.

FBM

The first blind man feels himself being taken by the arm and then hears the voice of a stranger.

THIEF

I'll take charge of the car and accompany you home. Just tell me where you live.

GIRL

Fifteen minutes later she is moaning.

BOY

I want my mommy!

GIRL

Eighteen minutes later she is whispering words of love she no longer needs to feign

DW

My love, what shall we—

DOC [Suddenly using razor to ward her off.]

What have I been thinking? Don't come near me. Keep away.

GIRL

After twenty minutes she begins to lose her head

FBM, 1W and BOY

I see everything white.

But blindness isn't like that. THIEF

After twenty-one minutes her body is lacerated with pleasure GIRL

Leave me, leave me. DOC

Now, now. GIRL

I won't leave you. DW

I won't leave you. THIEF

Wherever you go I shall DW

No. DOC

Yes! GIRL

[cries]-- BOY

I see everything white. GIRL