

Two hundred thousand francs!
He's comfortable, but he's not rolling in money.
Comfortable, that's all, just comfortable. And he spends two hundred grand on a white painting.

I have to go see Yvan, he's a friend of ours, I have to discuss this with Yvan. Although Yvan's a very tolerant guy, which of course, when it comes to relationships, is the worst thing you can be. Yvan's tolerant because he couldn't care less.

If Yvan tolerates the fact that Serge has spent two hundred grand on some piece of white shit, it means he couldn't care less about Serge. Obviously.

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(At Yvan's. On the wall, some motel painting. Yvan is on all fours with his back to us. He seems to be looking for something underneath a piece of furniture. As he does so, he turns to introduce himself.)

YVAN. I'm Yvan.

I'm a little tense at the moment, because, having spent my life in textiles, I've just found a new job as a sales agent for a wholesale stationery business.

People like me. My professional life has *always been* a failure and I'm getting married in two weeks. *She's a lovely* intelligent girl from a good family. *(Marc enters. Yvan has resumed his search and has his back to him.)*

MARC. What are you doing?

YVAN. I'm looking for the top to my pen. *(Time passes.)*

MARC. All right, that's enough.

YVAN. I had it five minutes ago.

MARC. It doesn't matter.

YVAN. Yes, it does. *(Marc gets down on his knees to help him look. Both of them spend some time looking. Marc straightens up.)*

MARC. Forget about it. Buy another one.

YVAN. It's a very special felt tip. It writes on any surface ... It's infuriating. Objects, I can't tell you how much they infuriate me. I had it in my hand five minutes ago.

MARC. Are you going to live here?

YVAN. Do you think it's suitable for a young couple?

MARC. Young couple! Ha, ha ...

YVAN. Try not to laugh like that in front of Catherine.

MARC. How's the stationery business?

YVAN. All right. I'm learning.

MARC. You've lost weight.

YVAN. A little. I'm pissed off about that top. It'll all dry up. Sit down.

MARC. If you keep on looking for that top, I'm leaving.

YVAN. Okay, I'll stop. You want something to drink?

MARC. A Perrier, if you have one. Have you seen Serge lately?

YVAN. No. Have you?

MARC. Yesterday.

YVAN. Is he okay?

MARC. Yes. He just bought a painting.

YVAN. Oh yes?

MARC. Yes.

YVAN. Nice?

MARC. White.

YVAN. White?

MARC. White. Imagine a canvas about five feet by four ... with a white background ... completely white in fact ... with fine white diagonal stripes ... you know ... and maybe another horizontal white line, toward the bottom ...

YVAN. How can you see them?

MARC. What?

YVAN. These white lines. If the background's white, how can you see the lines?

MARC. You just can. Because I suppose the lines are slightly grey, or vice versa, or anyway there are degrees of white! There's more than one kind of white!

YVAN. Don't get upset. Why are you getting upset?

MARC. You immediately start quibbling. Why can't you let me finish?

YVAN. All right. Go on.

MARC. Right. So, you have an idea of what the painting looks like.

YVAN. I think so, yes.
MARC. Now you have to guess how much Serge paid for it.
YVAN. Who's the painter?
MARC. Antrios. Ever heard of him?
YVAN. No. Is he fashionable?
MARC. I knew you were going to ask me that!
YVAN. Well, it's logical ...
MARC. No, it's not logical ...
YVAN. Of course it's logical, you ask me to guess the price, you know very well the price depends on how fashionable the painter is ...
MARC. I'm not asking you to apply a whole set of critical standards, I'm not asking you for a professional estimate, I'm asking you what you, Yvan, would pay for a white painting gussied up with a few off-white stripes.
YVAN. Jack shit.
MARC. Right. And what about Serge? Pick a figure at random.
YVAN. Ten thousand francs.
MARC. Ha!
YVAN. Fifty thousand.
MARC. Ha!
YVAN. A hundred thousand.
MARC. Keep going.
YVAN. A hundred and fifty? Two hundred?!
MARC. Two hundred. Two hundred grand.
YVAN. No!
MARC. Yes.
YVAN. Two hundred grand?
MARC. Two hundred grand.
YVAN. Has he gone crazy?
MARC. Looks like it. *(Slight pause.)*
YVAN. All the same ...
MARC. What do you mean, all the same?
YVAN. If it makes him happy ... he can afford it ...
MARC. So that's what you think, huh?
YVAN. Why? What do you think?
MARC. You don't understand the seriousness of this, do you?
YVAN. Er ... no.
MARC. It's strange how you're missing the basic point of this

story. All you can see is externals. You don't understand the seriousness of it.

YVAN. What is the seriousness of it?
MARC. You don't understand what this means?
YVAN. You want a cashew?
MARC. You don't see that suddenly, in some grotesque way, Serge sees himself as a "collector."
YVAN. Well ...
MARC. From now on, our friend Serge is one of the great connoisseurs.
YVAN. Bullshit.
MARC. Of course it's bullshit. You can't buy your way in that cheap. But that's what he thinks.
YVAN. Oh, I see.
MARC. Doesn't that bother you?
YVAN. No. Not if it makes him happy.
MARC. If it makes him happy. What's that supposed to mean? What kind of a philosophy is that, if it makes him happy?
YVAN. As long as it's not doing harm to anyone else ...
MARC. But it is, it is doing harm to me! I'm disturbed, I'm disturbed, more than that, I'm hurt, yes, I am. I'm fond of Serge and to see him let himself be ripped off and lose every ounce of discernment through sheer snobbery ...
YVAN. I don't know why you're so surprised. He's always haunted art galleries like crazy. He's always been an exhibition freak.
MARC. He's always been a freak, but a freak with a sense of humor. You see, basically, what really upsets me is that you can't laugh with him anymore.
YVAN. I'm sure you can.
MARC. You can't!
YVAN. Have you tried?
MARC. Of course I've tried. I laughed. Heartily. What do you think I did? He didn't crack a smile. Although, two hundred grand, that's kind of an expensive laugh.
YVAN. Yes. *(They laugh.)* I'll make him laugh.
MARC. I'd be amazed. Any more nuts?
YVAN. He'll laugh, you'll see.

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