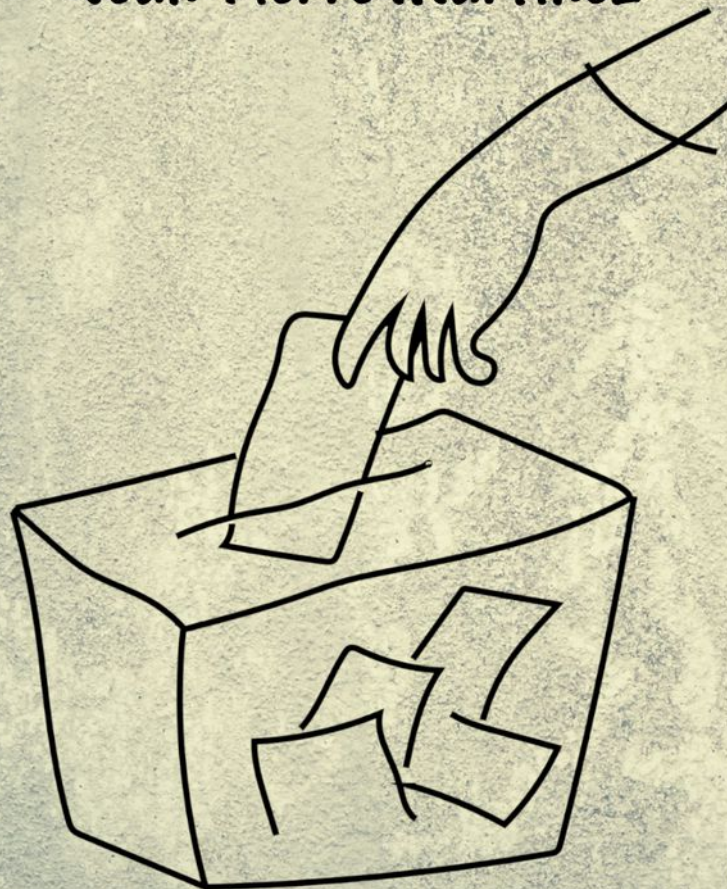


La Comédiathèque

King of Fools

Jean-Pierre Martinez



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Translation by the author

As the presidential election approaches, a party plummeting in the polls selects a designated fool to represent them, taking on the responsibility for the impending disaster. Simultaneously, they secretly promote an outsider candidate for their supporters to rally behind after their victory. However, the fool turns out to be unpredictable... and so do the voters.

Characters

Patrick Blank: Candidate for the Social Party
Victoria Dos Santos: Assistant
Nicky Riviera: Head of the Social Party
Alex Sticky: Communication Advisor
Percy Swindlemore von Hustlestein: Head of the Country Party
Fred Uberman: Independent Candidate

In this adaptation for 5, the roles of Percy and Fred
will be played by the same actor (or actress).

Every character, except for Patrick and Victoria, can be either male or female.
In this version, Alex and Fred are women and are called Alexandra and Frederica. If
they are men, we will call them Frederik and Alexander.

Possible castings : 1M/4W, 2M/3W, 3M/2W, 4M/1W

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Act 1

The campaign headquarters of the Social Party: an office furnished with a table, a few chairs, and a sofa. Nicky, the party leader, arrives with his left arm in a sling, along with Alex, his communication advisor.

Nicky – I just spoke with the President; his decision is made. He's not running for re-election.

Alex – Does he really have a choice?

Nicky – Obviously, as the Prime Minister and leader of the majority, I become the natural candidate.

Alex – But everyone hates you...

Nicky – Thanks for reminding me.

Alex – I wasn't referring to you personally, but to the party...

Nicky – Voters are fools. Every four years, they kick out the incumbents for not keeping their promises, only to vote for those who lied to them four years earlier.

Alex – That's called shift in power...

Nicky – I call it stupidity.

Alex – Do you want my opinion?

Nicky – If I weren't paying you for that, I might be tempted to say no...

Alex – We're screwed...

Nicky – Especially if I have to listen to such nonsense.

Alex – Nevertheless, I have an idea to get us out of this.

Nicky – I don't even know why I 'm still listening to you...

Alex – Do you really have a choice?

Nicky – I wonder if it wasn't by following your advice that we got ourselves into such a mess...

Alex – I think you didn't need anyone for that...

Nicky – Excuse me?

Alex – Anyway, those primaries are like a swimming competition in the Titanic's pool.

Nicky – Where are you going with your stupid metaphors?

Alex – It doesn't matter who wins; it'll all end in a shipwreck! That's what I mean.

Nicky – It's true that we're in a bad situation. A very bad one... So what's your plan B?

Alex – You were Plan B. And I must admit it was a lousy plan.

Nicky – Thanks for telling me.

Alex – So now we're more like Plan C.

Nicky – Plan C...?

Alex – People hate you. They no longer want to hear about the Social Party.

Nicky – After all we've done for them... We even changed the party's name.

Alex – What can we do... Voters are ungrateful. They don't realize all the sacrifices you've already made.

Nicky – Right, go ahead and make fun of me.

Alex – Can we talk seriously for five minutes?

Nicky – I'm listening...

Alex – The candidate who emerges from your primaries, even with a Soviet-style score, won't stand a chance in the presidential election.

Nicky – We'd still need a few volunteers to run against me... Just to preserve the appearance of democracy. Because having a single candidate is a bit embarrassing...

Alex – Volunteers who preferably aren't already under investigation...

Nicky – And who aren't running solely to avoid prison with the impunity that would protect them if they were elected.

Alex – I suppose you mean immunity.

Nicky – You're right. It's going to be tough to bounce back. So, what's your plan C?

Alex – When you can't bounce back, you might as well swim with the current.

Nicky – Earlier, it was the Titanic sinking, and now you're suggesting I swim... How much am I paying you to hear this?

Alex – It's very simple, you'll see...

Nicky – The last time you said that, I spent 48 hours in police custody.

Alex – But I kept you out of pretrial detention.

Nicky – I'm listening...

Alex – We make sure the primaries produce the worst possible candidate.

Nicky – So far, unfortunately, that shouldn't be too difficult. I'm the only one running.

Alex – The idea is to definitively sink the party, which is already taking on water from all sides anyway.

Nicky – Hence the Titanic metaphor, I get it... I hope you've prepared a lifeboat for me.

Alex – I have something much better, you'll see.

Nicky – I'm curious to hear it...

Alex – At the same time we sink our own captain, we discreetly push another candidate to run outside the party.

Nicky – A puppet, in a way...

Alex – All the voters want is to get rid of the incumbents. They're ready to vote for anyone as long as they claim to be anti-establishment.

Nicky – People are fools.

Alex – When our masked avenger is elected, he drops the mask and falls in line. Just before the legislative elections, we establish a new party to give him a majority, and it's done. We're using the same people, and we're good for another four years.

Nicky – Clever... But do we need to change the name again?

Alex – Yes, probably...

Nicky – Alright... Do you already have an idea for a new name?

Alex – How about... the Party?

Nicky – The Party...? The Party of what?

Alex – Just the Party. To make it clear that we're moving beyond the old left-right divides. The old left-right opposition.

Nicky – Mmm...

Alex – When the ones on the other side decided to call themselves 'The Country', everyone thought that was stupid too.

Nicky – You can see where that's taken them... And besides, you're forgetting about the right, precisely... Unfortunately, we're not the only ones fielding presidential candidates. It's one of the few disadvantages of democracy.

Alex – On the right as well, their candidate has so much baggage that if he opened a hardware store, he'd double his fortune.

Nicky – Which is already substantial considering all the public money he embezzled.

Alex – People no longer want either the left or the right.

Nicky – People are fools.

Alex – I think you've already mentioned that. So, what's your take on my idea?

Nicky – Sending a supposedly independent candidate to the presidency... Yes, it's worth considering... But who's to say the right won't have the same idea?

Alex – They have the same idea.

Nicky – Oh, really? And how can you be so sure of that?

Alex – Because I sold it to them.

Nicky – Do you also work for the competition?

Alex – Left, right... All of that is outdated, believe me.

Nicky – You're taking it a bit far...

Alex – Honestly, is there such a difference between your two platforms?

Nicky – I don't know... I'm not even sure we still have a platform. And neither do they.

Alex – In the end, what's the point of political turnover?

Nicky – To maintain the myth of democracy, I suppose...

Alex – Mostly to share the positions. One turn for you, one turn for me. Why not just govern together?

Nicky – But who would appoint the ministers? Them or us?

Alex – You could share the ministries among yourselves!

Nicky – Another version of parity, in a way.

Alex – I'm sure this one will be much easier for them to establish...

Nicky – Yes... but we'd have half the positions...

Alex – Not necessarily... Just double the number of ministers.

Nicky – Which would imply inventing new ministries...

Alex – I think in that, governments have never lacked imagination. It's the only area where they've demonstrated it, actually... Ministry of Free Time, Ministry of Quality of Life...

Nicky – Ministry of Productive Recovery...

Alex – Otherwise, we can always resort to consultancy to find new names based on the number of ministers to appoint. Or each minister will be responsible for inventing the name of their ministry's domain. They have to work a little...

Nicky – It's quite audacious, but alright... And who would be this independent candidate?

Alex – Why not Uberman?

Nicky – Frederica Uberman? I'm actually meeting her later.

Alex – I know. I asked her to schedule an appointment with you.

Nicky – Don't you think the suit is a bit too big on her?

Alex – She has already been a minister.

Nicky – That's right... Minister of what, exactly?

Alex – Education, I think.

Nicky – That's it... But I can't remember which government.

Alex – Having a woman would give us a more modern image and dispel suspicions. No one will seriously believe we've secretly backed a woman for the presidency

Nicky – Of course.

Alex – And besides, she'll be easier to manipulate once elected.

Nicky – Definitely... A woman... And a centrist, on top of that.

Alex – As for the role, she has already flipped her coat so many times... You can't tell the inside from the outside anymore. It will make her more credible as an independent candidate.

Nicky – Yes, it's worth a try... And for our primaries, who do you see in the role of the captain going down with his ship? I hope it's not me...

Alex – I was thinking of someone from outside. A newcomer who runs against you.

Nicky – A newcomer? Why not a virgin while you're at it?

Alex – You're closer to the truth than you think.

Nicky – Are you suggesting we sacrifice a virgin?

Alex – In fact, we could go with just about anyone...

Nicky – And who's to say they'll get elected?

Alex – For now, it's just the primaries. We're among family. We'll figure it out... The idea, precisely, is that this numskull isn't actually supported by anyone, not even within our own party.

Nicky – Alright, do you have a name to suggest?

Alex – The first fool who shows up will do...

Nicky – Fools are not in short supply among us. But they all have criminal records.

Alex – And they're pretentious fools, to boot. No, what we need is the candidate at ground zero. Someone loyal, with no personal ambition. And completely at our service.

Nicky – In politics, that's like looking for a unicorn.

Alex – Exactly. So maybe someone from the civilian sector?

Nicky – It's true that's all the rage these days.

Alex – Why not your chauffeur?

Nicky – You're kidding, right?

Alex – No. His name is Patrick.

Nicky – My chauffeur's name is Patrick? How do you know that?

Alex – I asked him his name, and he said Patrick.

Nicky – My chauffeur... But no one knows him. I didn't even know his name.

Alex – That's the point! This guy is completely invisible. He's nobody. He'll do exactly as he's told until we no longer need him.

Nicky – And you think he's the ideal candidate for our primaries?

Alex – He's the perfect scapegoat profile! He's not even a party member!

Nicky – Is he at least a sympathizer?

Alex – The party pays his salary. He's definitely a sympathizer. Grateful, at the very least.

Nicky – Well, I certainly don't trust him... (*Pointing to her arm in a sling*) Look! This is the souvenir he left me from the last race we did together, which ended up against a tree!

Alex – So that's why your arm's in a sling...

Nicky – He fell asleep at the wheel. He explained to me that he's narcoleptic.

Alex – Well, then, we'll just have to wake him up when we need him...

Nicky – That's very reassuring. And don't you think that with this idiot who falls asleep at the wheel, we're heading straight for disaster?

Alex – Exactly! The party is heading for disaster. And we're using it as a bounce-back opportunity!

Nicky – Yes... The last time I bounced off an obstacle with him, I sprained my wrist.

Alex – Of course, we'll touch up his resume a bit and take off the cap so he doesn't look too much like a valet. I don't know, we'll say he was... a taxi driver.

Nicky – A taxi driver at the helm of the state... It's the Uberization of the presidential function. And do you think he's up for it?

Alex – Up for it? You must be joking! He's the king of fools...

Nicky – And you want to entrust the leadership of the country to a so-called driver who doesn't even know how to handle my official car?

Alex – I remind you once again that the idea is for him not to be elected as president.

Nicky – That's true... I have to admit your Plan C is particularly convoluted... That's probably why, deep down, I don't dislike it... The king of fools... Yes... And why not my wife, instead?

Alex – Your wife? As queen of the fools, you mean?

Nicky – It might be safer to keep it within the family, right? Just in case things get out of hand...

Alex – For the voters, it would be better if it's someone a bit outside the family circle. And I also remind you that your wife is already your parliamentary assistant.

Nicky – You're right, I always forget that.

Alex – I'm not sure she's even aware of it herself.

Nicky – And do you think it could work?

Alex – Trust my experience: the bigger it is, the easier it goes down.

Nicky – Yes...

Alex – You still don't seem completely convinced...

Nicky – I'm just trying to foresee where it could go wrong.

Alex – Thanks for your trust.

Nicky – And what if he actually appeals to our electorate?

Alex – The Social Party supporters haven't connected with taxi drivers in a long while. Your voter base, or what remains of it, primarily comprises urban progressives, and at best, those from the upper-middle class.

Nicky – It's true that we're no longer the party of the working class...

Alex – In fact, your voters are somewhat similar to those on the opposite side, that's precisely the problem...

Nicky – My chauffeur...

Alex – Patrick.

Nicky – Well... Does your king of fools already know that he's destined for a national role?

Alex – Not yet. I was waiting for your approval.

Nicky – If you think it's the only solution...

Alex – Do you have a better idea?

Nicky – If I had ideas, I wouldn't pay you to have them for me...

Alex – So...

Nicky – Alright... You have my approval... But I hope I'm not making a foolish mistake.

Victoria arrives.

Victoria – Good morning.

Nicky – Ah! Perfect timing! Alexandra, let me introduce you to my assistant, Sabrina de Sousa.

Victoria – Victoria Dos Santos, Mr. Riviera.

Nicky – That's right... Victoria...

Alex – Nice to meet you.

Nicky – I can easily do without my parliamentary assistant, and, even more without my wife, but I can't do anything without Victoria. I don't even know how to send an email.

Alex – Yes... That's why I think it's urgent to change our approach.

Victoria – Mr. Riviera, I need to speak with you about the press conference. Journalists are getting impatient. They want to know the names of the candidates for our primaries.

Nicky – I'm all yours right away. I'll walk Alexandra out. *(To Alex)* Do you want my chauffeur to take you back?

Alex – You told me he was narcoleptic... Are you trying to get rid of me?

Nicky – You can use the opportunity to talk to him about... Sabrina, haven't you seen my chauffeur?

Victoria – Patrick? No...

Alex – So you also know his name is Patrick...

Victoria – Yes, of course...

Nicky – I don't know where that idiot has gone... He must have fallen asleep somewhere again... Not off to a good start...

They exit. Victoria sits at one of the desks, opens her laptop, and starts typing on the keyboard. Her phone rings.

Victoria – Social Party campaign headquarters, how can I help you?... No, Nicky Riviera can't speak to you right now... Yes, I know, we're just a few weeks away from the elections and... I'm sure you'll hear news very soon... Alright... Have a good day...

Patrick arrives. He's wearing a rather ill-fitting chauffeur uniform and a cap.

Patrick – Hi, Victoria!

Victoria – Patrick? You scared me. Mr. Riviera is looking for you, actually.

Patrick – I was just dropping by to say hello quickly.

Victoria – Well... hello! And goodbye!

Patrick – Hey, Victoria, do you... have lunch sometimes?

Victoria – We're a bit busy right now... As you know, we're in the middle of the primary campaign, and we don't even have the list of candidates yet. I'm just having a sandwich at my desk.

Patrick – Well, but... we could have coffee one of these days... I'll bring you one; it's on me...

Victoria – That's kind of you, but... right now, I don't have much time. And besides, Mr. Riviera will be waiting for you...

Patrick – I don't know what he wants... In fact, I wonder why he has a chauffeur. He prefers to take a taxi.

Victoria – Yes, in fact, one wonders why... But I think it's for Mrs. Sticky.

Patrick – She can wait two minutes as well.

Patrick's phone rings.

Victoria – Apparently not...

Patrick (*answering the call*) – Yes, I'm coming right away... (*He hangs up.*) I won't leave here without getting an answer...

Victoria – About what?

Patrick – About the coffee we should have together...

Victoria – You're going to get fired.

Patrick – And it will be your fault.

Victoria – I promise to think about it... Now, go...

Patrick – Thanks!

Patrick exits. Victoria smiles. Victoria's phone rings again.

Victoria – Yes? Alright, I'll let him know as soon as he arrives...

Nicky returns, looking concerned.

Nicky – Did you find my crazy driver?

Victoria – Patrick just left a moment ago. He's taking Mrs. Sticky back...

Nicky – Very well... Tell me, Victoria, do you know my chauffeur?

Victoria – Patrick? Yes, well... Just a little...

Nicky – What kind of guy is he?

Victoria – What kind?

Nicky – Do you think we can count on him? I mean, besides driving a car...

Victoria – Don't blame him, sir. If he was a little late this morning, it was my fault.

Nicky – Don't tell me you and he...

Victoria – But of course not! I... I had asked him to mail a letter, and...

Nicky – I see...

Victoria – Your appointment has arrived. She's waiting downstairs.

Nicky – Very well. Please have her come up.

Victoria answers her phone again.

Victoria – Please tell Mrs. Uberman she can come up...

Nicky's mobile phone rings, and he answers it.

Nicky – Yes? Yes, Mr. President. Good morning, Mr. President. Yes, I know the situation is very concerning, and... Very well, Mr. President... Yes, of course, I'll take care of that... Listen, I wonder if Sticky hasn't had a stroke of genius this time...

He exits to continue his conversation. Fred enters.

Fred – I've come to see Nicky.

Victoria – Mr. Riviera will be with you in a moment. He's on the line with the President... Can I get you some coffee in the meantime?

Fred – Without sugar, please.

Victoria leaves. Nicky returns.

Nicky – Oh, hello, Frederica.

Fred – Hi, Nicky.

Nicky – I was with the President, and...

Fred – I imagine all of this is of concern to him, obviously... Even though, in his case, there's a lifelong position waiting on the Constitutional Council.

Nicky – Indeed... Now that our presidents are too young to die at the end of their terms, the Constitutional Council is their perpetual concession... Well... Listen, Frederica, I won't beat around the bush, we'll save time.

Fred – I wasn't in that much of a hurry, but go ahead, I'm listening...

Nicky – Perhaps you were considering running in our primaries, and in that case, you're welcome, of course.

Fred – Thank you, but...

Nicky – But I'll be honest with you. Given the state of the movement today, if you run under the Social Party label, you have no chance.

Fred – That wasn't really my intention...

Nicky – And currently, if you run without a label, even less.

Fred – That's encouraging. So, what do you propose?

Nicky – You run as an independent candidate. But we'll give you the exam topics in advance. And we'll make sure to disqualify all the other candidates.

Fred – Excuse me?

Nicky – We sabotage the other candidates, and we secretly support you.

Fred – And suppose I do win. What comes next? I won't have a majority.

Nicky – Afterward, the Social Party rallies behind you as one, under the label of the presidential majority. We keep the same people, and we start over. We just need to change the party's name.

Fred – I see... And who runs on behalf of the Social Party?

Nicky – The winner of the primaries.

Fred – But no one wants to run. Except for you...

Nicky – We've found someone.

Fred – Who? The best among us?

Nicky – The worst... My chauffeur.

Fred – Is this a joke?

Nicky – No.

Fred – Your chauffeur... And what's his name?

Nicky – Patrick. His name is Patrick...

Fred – Patrick what?

Nicky – No idea...

Victoria returns with a coffee, which she hands to Fred.

Nicky – Ah, Victoria... What's my chauffeur's last name?

Victoria – Blank... Patrick Blank.

Nicky – Blank, his name is Blank. Not bad, right? It sounds clean.

Fred – Voting for Blank, sure, that will surely mobilize the electorate.

Nicky – He's not supposed to get past the primaries, anyway. Come to my office, I'll explain everything to you...

Nicky and Fred exit. Patrick arrives.

Victoria – Are you still here?

Patrick – Mrs Sticky didn't want me to accompany her back... and the boss wants to see me. I think I'm getting fired this time.

Victoria – I hope it's not because of me...

Patrick – Anyway, I was fed up with being a chauffeur. Besides, I don't even have my driver's license.

Victoria – You're a chauffeur and you don't have a license?

Patrick – Yes, of course, calm down. I have a license. But... it's been suspended.

Victoria – Alright... That actually reassures me...

Patrick – And yet, luckily, I didn't tell them during the occupational health check that I'm narcoleptic.

Nicky returns with Alex.

Nicky – Now that Mr. Blank is here, let's settle this once and for all.

Victoria – I'll leave you to it...

Victoria exits.

Alex – First of all, Mr. Blank, I'll ask you to sign this.

Patrick – What's this? My severance package?

Nicky – A confidentiality agreement.

Patrick – I see... But don't worry, I don't intend to write my memoirs once I'm unemployed. In school, I wasn't very good at writing, anyway. Although it's true, I've heard a lot of things...

Alex – It's just to make sure that everything said here remains between us.

Patrick – You're making me nervous. Is it really that serious? If you're considering letting me go, I'm okay with that. I simply request a mutually agreed-upon termination, if that's possible. It would allow me to continue receiving unemployment benefits. Besides, a dismissal for serious misconduct doesn't leave a favourable mark on a CV.

Nicky – Sign it...

Patrick – Yes, boss...

Patrick signs. The other two look at him with a concerned expression.

Nicky – Tell me, Rick... Do you mind if I call you Rick?

Patrick – My name is Patrick...

Nicky – Well, let's not split hairs. Anyway, my dear Patrick, it turns out I've heard many good things about you.

Patrick – Oh, really? Who said that?

Nicky – Well... Sabrina, for instance.

Patrick – I don't know her...

Alex – Mr. Riviera is referring to Victoria.

Patrick – Oh, really? Victoria?

Nicky – In short, the party needs people like you. Would you like to get into politics?

Patrick – Politics? You mean... handing out flyers in markets and stuff?

Nicky – We were thinking of something more in line with your skills.

Patrick – I see... Like putting up posters at night, maybe?

Nicky – As you may know, the political landscape is undergoing a significant change.

Alex – Not to mention decomposition.

Nicky – We need some fresh blood.

Patrick – If it's for a blood donation, I'm really sorry. I'd love to help, but I can't stand needles.

Nicky – We're looking for our candidate for the primaries.

Patrick – Primaries?

Nicky – The left-wing primaries, yes.

Alex – Well, for the Social Party, at least.

Patrick – Oh, I see.

Nicky – This is the campaign headquarters, here. You are aware of that, aren't you?

Patrick – You know, I'm not really into politics...

Nicky – That's perfect. We're actually looking for someone with fresh ideas.

Patrick – Ideas?

Alex – Yes, don't worry about that. I'll give you ideas. That's my job.

Patrick – My job, until now, was being a chauffeur...

Nicky gives him an irritated look.

Alex – So, are you interested, yes or no?

Patrick – If I can help you...

Nicky – Yes, precisely, you could be very helpful.

Alex – And without jumping the gun, I think that would make Victoria very happy...

Patrick – You think so?

Nicky – Of course... You'll have to adapt your style a bit, though...

Patrick – My style?

Alex – You can't continue dressing... like a lackey. But don't worry, we'll pay for your suits.

Patrick – But... you'll still keep me as a driver?

Nicky – That seems a bit challenging. We'll give you a promotion. I don't know, maybe Party treasurer, for instance.

Patrick – Treasurer? Well, you see, numbers... Actually, letters aren't any better...

Alex – No need to worry, it's quite simple, you know. In fact, it's mostly... an honorary title.

Patrick – Honorary...? But... What if I don't perform the job?

Nicky – In that case, I promise I'll hire you back as a driver.

Patrick – Alright...

Nicky – So, do you agree?

Patrick – Yes, boss.

Nicky – I've already told you not to call me boss during the Social Party primaries. But when you're running for President of the Republic, you'll really have to drop the habit of calling me boss, right...?

Patrick – Running for...? But I hadn't understood that at all..

The other two exchange a disappointed look.

Alex – Let me explain one last time.

Patrick – Yes, please...

Alex – So, what we're asking you to do is...

Patrick falls into a catatonic state.

Nicky – Well, this won't be easy...

Fade to black.

Act 2

Victoria is typing on her computer. Her phone rings.

Victoria – Social Party campaign HQ, how can I help you? No, I'm sorry, Mr. President, we don't have any results to provide for the primaries yet. Of course, as soon as we have an estimate, you'll be the first to be informed. But, please, Mr. President... At your service, Mr. President... (*She hangs up.*) Otherwise, you can order some pizzas and watch the election night on TV...

Percy arrives. He's wearing a fake moustache. Vanessa looks surprised for a moment.

Percy – Good evening, miss.

Victoria – Oh, Mr. Swindlemore von Hustlestein. I didn't recognize you...

Percy – All the better... It means my disguise is effective... By the way, if you could avoid mentioning my name... I've come incognito.

Victoria – Indeed, I didn't expect to see you here... You do know that this is the Social Party campaign HQ, not the Country Party that you preside over?

Percy – We live in a time of great confusion, my dear. The time has come for us to unite. Soon we will be called upon to merge into one big party called... the Party for Everyone.

Victoria – I have no doubt that together, once again, you will save the country from the dangers that threaten it.

Percy – When one has a sense of state, one cannot remain indifferent in such a situation. In any case, you look very beautiful today, my dear.

Victoria – Why "today"? Should I understand that it's not always the case? The last time, did I look like a monster or something?

Percy – Not at all!

Victoria – Or perhaps you're mistaking me for someone else...

Percy – Miss, believe me, once someone has seen you, they can't mistake you for anyone else.

Victoria – Do you know that, in theory, Mr. Senator, you're not supposed to call me "Miss" anymore?

Percy – Please, don't tell me you've gotten married, that would break my heart.

Victoria – No, but now we're supposed to address all women as "Mrs". It's the law, to combat sexist discrimination. A law you yourself voted for not too long ago. Have you already forgotten?

Percy – If I had to remember all the laws I vote for... But I hope this law doesn't prohibit me from telling you that you're lovely... Otherwise, I'll immediately introduce a bill to repeal it.

Victoria – Then, vote for a law that allows women to call older gentlemen "young man"... And Mr. Senator, you are married, aren't you?

Percy – How cruel of you to remind me, my dear child...

Victoria – Well, I suppose you didn't come here just to ask for my hand as your second wife...

Percy – Indeed... I've come to see... you know who.

Victoria – If it's the one I'm thinking of, he'll be here in a moment.

Percy –I'll go hide in a closet and wait for him. No one must see me here. Especially no journalists. By the way, if anyone asks you, you've never seen me, all right?

Victoria – Don't worry, for me, you don't even exist.

He exits with a conspiratorial air. Alex arrives.

Alex – Is Riviera here?

Victoria – Good evening, Mrs. Sticky. No, Nicky hasn't arrived yet. He's been following the primary vote count from the party headquarters. But he shouldn't be long.

Alex – I'll wait then... Is there coffee?

Victoria (*bewildered*) – Yes, I suppose there's some left. The espresso machine is by the entrance. You must have seen it when you arrived, to your right.

Alex (*caught off guard*) – Oh yes...

Victoria – But if you don't know how to use it, I can help you, of course.

Alex – A double. No sugar.

Victoria – Very well. I must have the user manual for that machine in a drawer. (*Starts searching*) That will give you something to read while waiting for Mr. Riviera...

Alex – That won't be necessary, thank you...

Victoria – All right, no coffee then...

She stops searching and returns to typing on her computer. Alex wanders around the room.

Alex – Did you vote in the primaries?

Victoria – Yes, of course...

Alex – And if it's not too indiscreet, who did you vote for?

Victoria – That's indiscreet, Mrs. Sticky... But I suppose you've conducted polls...

Alex – Well, you know, polls have this knack for mirroring whatever storyline you're trying to weave, and voters, they're like clay in your hands. It's really all about the fine art of persuasion and subtly shaping their viewpoints...

Victoria – And you're an expert at that, I have no doubt. Well, as Churchill said, "Democracy is the worst form of government, except for all the others."

Alex seems a bit taken aback by that reply.

Alex – Would you consider working for me after the campaign? We need women like you.

Victoria – Why not...? But I wonder if I want to work for people like you. I'll think about it...

Alex – And... What do you think of this Patrick?

Victoria – As a candidate?

Alex – Of course, as a candidate!

Victoria – Let's say it's... a change of pace.

Alex – He's a fool. You can tell me.

Victoria – I wouldn't put it that way, but well...

Alex – I committed to getting him elected in the primaries, but I think I overestimated him once again, that idiot. Although I already had a very low estimation of him.

Victoria – So why did you push him to run?

Alex – Politics has its reasons that secretaries should ignore...

Victoria – Nowadays, we say assistant.

Alex – That's a shame... Secretaries, at least, used to make coffee.

Alex leaves. Victoria picks up a cup from her desk and enjoys her coffee.

Victoria – This coffee is really good...

Patrick arrives. He has completely changed his appearance. He's now wearing a suit with a striped jacket and tie.

Patrick – Hello, Victoria.

Victoria – Hello, Patrick. How are you? You look worried...

Patrick – Did you see me on TV?

Victoria – Yes...

Patrick – And how did I come across?

Victoria – Fine...

Patrick – Seriously! I looked completely stupid, I know...

Victoria – At least you don't beat around the bush.

Patrick – You think so?

Victoria – When that journalist asked you, "Do you know how many unemployed people there are in this country?"...

Patrick – And I replied, "I have no idea"...

Victoria – It left him speechless. And when he questioned you about the military budget...

Patrick – And I said, "I don't know and I don't care."

Victoria – It left him at a loss for words.

Patrick – Oh, I have no illusions... Everyone's laughing at me...

Victoria – Trust me, Patrick, only humour can save our country. You should play that card to the fullest. In this country, when you have the audience laughing on your side, you've already won.

Patrick – One also says that to attract a woman, you should start by making her laugh... Do you think I still have a chance with you?

Victoria – Well, at least on TV, you made me laugh... When they asked you what you thought of your competitors' programs, and you suddenly fell asleep...

Patrick – Fortunately, it was the end of the show.

Victoria – You're very comfortable in front of the public, and you don't let the questions bother you. Probably because you don't answer any.

Patrick – I'm glad to hear that...

Victoria – Nevertheless, I have some constructive criticism for you.

Patrick – I'm all ears.

Victoria – Your tie. It doesn't match your jacket at all.

Patrick – Really? It was Alexandra who...

Victoria – The stripes don't go in the same direction. The ones on the tie go to the right, while the ones on the jacket go to the left.

Patrick – It's true; I look like a confused zebra...

She approaches him. He's perplexed. She unties his tie.

Victoria – And besides, you don't need a tie... This way, you'll seem closer to your voters. And you'll breathe much better.

Patrick – I should hire you as my communication advisor!

Victoria – I don't know if Sticky would agree...

Patrick – Anyway, I know I don't stand a chance. They told me it was just to make up the numbers.

Victoria – Oh, really?

Patrick – They're short on candidates, you see? In a primary, there obviously should to be several candidates. Well, at least two...

Victoria – Of course... And even if you're not the main attraction, do they pay you as an extra?

Patrick – I still have my salary as a driver! But now, I'm apparently the party's treasurer. I'm not sure what that means exactly...

Victoria – It means that if there's any issue with the campaign finances, you'll be the one going to jail.

Patrick – Oh, really? They didn't tell me that...

Victoria – The good news is, if you get elected, you'll only go to jail after your term.

Patrick – I have no chance of making it through the primaries. For me, it's straight to jail.

Victoria – You could endear yourself to the party members...

Patrick – Me? No... Tonight it'll all be over, and I can go back to my job as a driver.

Victoria – And Sticky, how did she find you on TV?

Patrick – When I saw her right after, she said, "Keep it up, Patrick." But I don't know if that was a compliment...

Victoria – I have faith in you. I think you're going to surprise them.

Patrick – In that case, you can't refuse me a coffee anymore! You'll give me some tips on how to dress for my next TV appearance. To concede my defeat and congratulate the winner...

Victoria – Alright... It's my break time anyway.

They exit. Nicky arrives with Percy Swindlemore von Hustlestein, who is wearing a fake moustache.

Nicky – I hope no one saw you arrive here.

Percy – I came in through the back door. And I put on a fake moustache.

Nicky – Ah, that's it... You did seem different in some way... Anyhow, congratulations on your victory in the right-wing primaries.

Percy – Oh, you know, I was elected by a small fraction of our remaining members – a mix of nostalgics of the dictatorship and religious fanatics. I'm fully aware that my chances in the presidential election are slim. As my wife often puts it, "You lack charisma."

Nicky – It's all about the circumstances, you see. The dictator who governed this country for years wasn't much of a true leader either.

Percy – Still, his moustache is a lasting memory. Unfortunately, whether I sport a moustache or not, no one seems to take notice...

Nicky – What can you do? The voters in this country are like sheep, ready to cast their votes for anyone, even the shepherd who promises to guide them to the slaughterhouse. They don't deserve us, I must say.

Percy – Nevertheless, in the end, they'll still have us... As usual...

Nicky – Yes... If our plan goes as planned...

Percy – But tell me, haven't you gone a bit far with this Patrick? I watched him on TV, during the debate. He seems a bit simple-minded, doesn't he? He has to remain credible...

Nicky – In the primaries, we're among ourselves. We can manipulate the votes. Afterwards, the idea is that neither he nor you will be able to overshadow our common candidate...

Percy – Frederica Uberman... The darling of the polls... Are you sure this won't give her any ideas of independence?

Nicky – She'll need a majority to govern... She'll come back to see her old friends.

Percy – You're right, it's with the old cronies that we make the best governments.. Besides, we'll have to get together to decide on the allocation of portfolios... And you, do you have any preferences?

Nicky – Oh, me, you know... One portfolio or another. As long as it's well-stocked!

They both laugh heartily.

Percy – You're priceless, my dear friend.

Nicky – Priceless, no, but certainly expensive!

They laugh again. Alex arrives.

Percy – Ah, Mrs. Sticky... I hope we won't regret trusting you.

Nicky – Sticky... A fitting name. Both on the right and the left, for over twenty years, we haven't managed to get rid of her.

Nicky and Percy laugh again, while Alex looks at them indignantly. The other two regain their composure.

Percy – So, where are we at, dear?

Alex – I've just left the President's office. He approves of our plan. Obviously, he won't officially endorse Uberman.

Percy – That would be the best way to make her lose.

Alex – But after the legislative elections, he commits to supporting a broad reconfiguration of our country's political landscape.

Nicky – In other words?

Alex – His illustrious predecessor united the left, and the President aims to be remembered as the one who united both the left and the right in history.

Percy – Above all, he'll be remembered as the one who united everyone against him...

They laugh.

Nicky – Be a bit charitable, dear... You don't shoot at a hearse.

Percy – You're right. By the way, Alexandra, you always have great advice. What do you think of me like this?

Alex – Excuse me?

Percy – You can clearly see I've changed something!

Alex – No, I don't see...

Percy (*to Nicky*) – See? I told you...

Nicky – And this is called communication advice...

Percy – Well, I better get going. Otherwise, I'll get an earful from my wife. We're going to watch the circus on TV tonight...

Nicky – The circus? Do they still broadcast circus on TV?

Percy – I was just talking about election night...

Nicky and Percy laugh again.

Nicky – Well, take care, old friend.

Percy leaves. Nicky immediately regains his seriousness.

Nicky – What an idiot... As soon as Uberman is elected, we'll manage to get rid of him...

Alex – Do you already have a plan?

Nicky – I have an idea, but I'm not going to tell you. Now that I know you're working for him as well.

Alex – We can always work something out...

Nicky – How much has he offered you to betray me?

Alex – I can assure you he hasn't made me any offer yet.

Nicky – I'll double it...

Alex – Alright...

Nicky – One thing's for sure, losing these primaries protects me. Voters have short memories. I'll fade into the background for a while and then become an option again.

Alex – A ticket with Uberman?

Nicky – We're not there yet. But yes, I believe I have a shot with her... So, what about Patrick? Is he going to cause any problems for us? Do you think he has a chance of winning our primaries?

Alex – In any case, we've done our best. He only has two candidates against him. You, the resigned Prime Minister, and a member of parliament accused of sexual harassment by his parliamentary assistant, who happens to be just fifteen years old and his niece.

Nicky – That's why I brought my wife along. At least I won't have those kinds of problems.

Alex – Furthermore, she's the one forwarding her salary to you.

Nicky – So, you're calling me a pimp now... How does he take it?

Alex – Patrick? He's convinced he has no chance...

Nicky – Well, after his performance in the TV debate...

Alex – True, he was a bit out of touch.

Nicky – Although you have to admit he had a certain freshness. And the show got good ratings.

Alex – He's an fool, but at least he doesn't have a criminal record.

Nicky – Are you sure about that, at least?

Alex – I checked with the Minister of the Justice. I found out they revoked his driver's license.

Nicky – It doesn't surprise me, considering he nearly killed me several times...

Alex – Now that he's the treasurer, we'll have him address the party's questionable accounts before returning his chauffeur's cap.

Nicky – Yes, because I've given enough already... We should have the results of the primaries any moment now. Have you heard anything yet?

Alex – So far, everything's fine, don't worry.

Nicky – If he's elected, our party doesn't stand a chance in the presidential elections. It's strange to say everything is going fine, but well...

Alex – With those two clowns on the right and left, there's a clear path in the centre. Uberman will pass in the first round of the presidential election.

Nicky – May the devil hear us...

Nicky's mobile phone rings, and he answers.

Nicky – Yes... Alright... No... Are you sure? Okay...

He puts away his phone.

Alex – So?

Nicky – It's done. Patrick Blank wins the primaries... with 83% of the votes.

Alex – I told you. Our plan worked like a charm...

Nicky – Yes... But 83%, that's a lot, isn't it?

Alex – Maybe we went a bit overboard with ballot stuffing. We didn't expect him to naturally gather so many votes.

Nicky – I only got 7% myself. I didn't plan on winning, but still, it's quite humiliating. You could have at least given me a double-digit score..

Alex – We can still recount the votes... How many do you want?

Nicky – What about him? I don't know if he's already aware of his victory...

Alex – That will be quite a shock for him. I'll think about the best way to break the news to him...

Nicky – Sooner or later, he'll have to find out he's a presidential candidate.

They exit. Patrick returns with Victoria.

Patrick – Anyway, I know I don't stand a chance.

Victoria – Then why did you run?

Patrick – Because the boss asked me to! So that the other two don't look as stupid next to me, I suppose...

Victoria – Don't sell yourself short, Patrick. You're not as dumb as you seem... I mean, you're less dumb than you claim.

Patrick – That is kind of you to say.

Victoria – Do you really think so?

Patrick – But if I agreed to be a candidate, it was also for another reason...

Victoria – Oh really?

Patrick – Mrs. Sticky told me you had a good opinion of me...

Victoria – She told you that?

Patrick – And she also said that you'd be proud of me if I accepted this mission. I know I don't have much ambition in life, but knowing that you're proud of me motivates me...

Victoria – I'm glad...

Patrick – I never knew my parents, you see... At least you've always been kind to me.

Victoria – But I wonder if the people manipulating you are as kind as I am.

Patrick – I certainly didn't anticipate being summoned to court over the party's secret financing..

Victoria – Yes... One wonders why it's happening now.

Patrick – If you hadn't been here to tell me what to say to the judge...

Victoria – I think he understood that they wanted to make you the scapegoat.

Patrick – What can I do?

Victoria's phone rings, and she answers.

Victoria – Yes? Okay... How many? Alright, I'll send him right away...

Patrick – So?

Victoria – You've received 83% of the votes cast.

Patrick – What does that mean?

Victoria – It means you're in the lead! The other two are splitting the remaining 17%...

Patrick – That can't be possible... It must be a mistake...

Victoria – Nicky wants to see you.

Patrick – Anyway, I'll never win in the second round.

Victoria – There's no second round. You have an absolute majority. You're a candidate in the presidential elections!

Patrick – Really?

Victoria – I think it's time for me to personally take charge of your campaign... But for now, Mr. Riviera is waiting for you. Are you coming with me?

Victoria and Patrick exit. Alex and Percy arrive.

Percy – I've struck a deal with Uberman. Once she's elected, she promised me the position of Prime Minister.

Alex (*ironically*) – Didn't you say you'd settle for the Ministry of Finance?

Percy – Finance? With the country's financial situation, I might as well beg in the subway.

Alex – And are you sure Uberman hasn't already promised Riviera the position of Prime Minister?

Percy – Yes, of course. In fact, that's why I wanted to see you...

Alex – Well, well...

Percy – Now that you're on his team, you must be privy to quite a few secrets, don't you think? I mean... things he'd rather the press keep quiet about.

Alex – The press is already quite well-informed about Riviera, and he's already facing some legal issues.

Percy – I'm not referring to mere mishandling of company resources or unexplained expense reports. What I'm looking for is something that would compel him to step away from politics for good.

Alex – I might have something that could interest you. But what do I get out of this?

Percy – The price of betrayal? I'm not sure. How highly do you rate your honor? Unless you've already traded it away multiple times...

Alex – How about a ministry? It won't cost you much. And it would make my mother so happy...

Percy – Very well. What would make you happy?

Alex – I was thinking... the Ministry of Transport.

Percy – I must say, you surprise me...

Alex – When I was little, my sister played with dolls. I asked for an electric train set for Christmas. My mother refused. I got the Barbie Dream House.

Percy – In my case, it was more like Monopoly, but alright... Fine, I'll give you the four train stations.

Alex – Thank you.

Percy – I'm listening.

Alex – I'm telling you, this is big...

They exit.

Act 3

Nicky, still with his arm in a sling, arrives with Percy.

Nicky – So, how's it looking, Percy?

Percy – As far as I'm concerned, it's going to be a miscarriage. The polls have me barely at 3% in the first round.

Nicky – Perfect!

Percy – I admire your enthusiasm...

Nicky – It's entirely in line with our plan, isn't it?

Percy – The famous plan C...

Nicky – Sinking the aircraft carriers of both the right and the left, to bring our nuclear submarine to the centre.

Percy – And then we divide up the portfolios of the shipwrecked... I don't know why, but it seems a bit twisted to work...

Nicky – Yet, you're no stranger to dirty tricks...

Percy – So, in the end, are you interested in the position of Prime Minister?

Nicky – After those revelations about my private life, I'm no longer in a position for such an exposed role... I'll settle for Veterans Affairs or Overseas Territories.

Percy – Nasty business, indeed... I wonder how the press found out.

Nicky – Yes, I wonder too...

Percy – Careful, I'm not judging anyone! Everyone has the right to live their sexuality as they wish. As long as it doesn't harm anyone.

Nicky – Thanks...

Percy – Although we have to admit, you did the right thing. If you had remained a woman, you wouldn't have had such a successful political career. Our fellow citizens are so misogynistic. Well, they were even more so back then than today...

Nicky – Yes, well...

Percy – To get elected, we're all ready for certain sacrifices, but still... Going as far as surgery to change one's gender...

Nicky – What?

Percy – Look on the bright side. You've become a symbol, Nicky. An icon of the LGBT movement. You would have been the first transgender prime minister in this country.

Nicky – But come on, I'm not transgender!

Percy – That's not what the press is saying...

Nicky – I've been trying to explain to them. It's simply a mistake my mother made when she registered my birth at the town hall! She really wanted a daughter... That's probably why she gave me a unisex name. So naturally, Nicky... No one noticed the problem

Percy – They say she dressed you in dresses until your first communion...

Nicky – Only at home! And since I didn't attend public school... I was educated by a tutor... A priest, who also wore robes...

Percy – Right, yes... Until you were 18... When you decided to change gender to get into university...

Nicky – Not change my gender! To set the record straight on my civil status.

Percy – At least it allowed you to avoid military service.

Nicky – It took time to prove it was a mistake and get new documents... You know how slow bureaucracy can be. I officially became a man again at 23.

Percy – Well, anyway... It's your business... And speaking of women, how's it going with our champion?

Nicky – Uberman? According to the latest estimates, she's still in the lead with 32% in the first round.

Percy – That's not a very comfortable margin. And that was before Patrick Blank was designated as the Social Party candidate.

Nicky – That guy has the charisma of an oyster. Pearls of wisdom aren't exactly his forte. It shouldn't change much.

Percy – Who knows... There are quite a few voters who like oysters. And we have to admit, in terms of pearls, some pretty big ones come out...

Alex arrives.

Nicky – You look concerned! What's going on?

Alex – I just received the latest polling numbers.

Percy – So, what's the story?

Alex – There's a small surprise, but we'll fix it quickly.

Nicky – A surprise?

Alex – For now, Patrick is coming in second.

Percy – Is this a joke?

Alex – It's just a poll for now. And it's only the first round.

Nicky – How much?

Alex – 25...

Percy – 25% of the vote share!

Nicky – What about Frederica?

Alex – She has dropped slightly to 27...

Percy – We could say we're within the margin of error...

Nicky – And at this point, it's not the primaries anymore. It would be much more complicated to manipulate the votes.

Percy – You assured us that this Patrick was a fool!

Alex – But he is a fool! I guarantee it. How can I change things if the voters identify with him?

Nicky – Naively, I thought it was your job to foresee this kind of thing

Percy – Are you just discovering today that voters are fools? Then what are we paying you for?

Alex – Don't worry, he'll soon plummet in the polls. We'll do everything we can.

Nicky – Oh really, and what are you going to do?

Percy – After his last appearance on television, he gained 10 points.

Nicky – It's true, he seemed different, didn't he?

Percy – Yes... He's unrecognizable.

Alex – He's almost funny at times...

Nicky – I hope this isn't another one of your twisted tricks. Don't tell me you're secretly advising him too?

Percy – You're spreading yourself thin, Alexandra.

Alex – Not at all!

Nicky – Or maybe she made a secret deal with you, Swindlemore!

Percy – I swear she didn't!

Nicky – I advise you not to double-cross me. I still have influence, and you know what I'm capable of...

Alex – I'll take care of that...

They exit. Patrick arrives with Victoria. Patrick has adopted a new look, much more modern but a bit eccentric. He holds a paper bag with the McDonald's logo in one hand and a cardboard cup from which he noisily sips the contents with a straw in the other.

Victoria – Thank you for this invitation, Patrick. But you must have spent a fortune...

Patrick – I'll classify these two Big Mac meals as campaign expenses. You're my advisor, right?

Victoria – For now, it's best if it stays between us.

Patrick – I don't understand anything about politics. But with you, everything becomes simple. They should have chosen you as the candidate, not me.

Victoria – I think I didn't seem dumb enough. They were wary of me. I'm sorry, that's not what I meant...

Patrick – Oh, I know I don't really have the profile of a presidential candidate. In fact, I still don't understand why they chose me...

Victoria – You have a lot to learn before you're fully prepared for politics, Patrick.

Patrick – I know I'll never be elected, but this adventure has opened my eyes to many things I didn't know.

Victoria – You have potential, Patrick. So far, you haven't had the chance to express it, that's all.

She approaches him, displaying a charming allure.

Patrick – I'll be your student, Victoria...

Victoria – I'll always be by your side, Patrick. But you'll have to listen to me closely, okay?

Patrick – I'll hang on your every word.

Victoria – And do exactly what I tell you.

Patrick – I'll be your slave... Command, and I will obey...

They lean in to kiss, but the phone rings, interrupting this moment of reverie. She answers it.

Victoria – Yes? Yes... Alright, thank you. No, no, I'll tell him... *(She ends the call.)*
The results have just come out.

Patrick – Don't tell me I'm in the lead.

Victoria – You're in second place.

Patrick – Phew... That means I'm not elected, then.

Victoria – Not in the first round, obviously, but you're still in the running for the second.

Patrick – Oh no...

Victoria – I'll take good care of you, don't worry. Are you coming?

They exit. Nicky and Fred enter.

Fred – You promised me he wouldn't make it.

Nicky – That's what we all thought.

Fred – You're not trying to screw me over, are you?

Nicky – I assure you that...

Fred – You pushed me to run outside of the party, saying this guy was just a sacrificial lamb sinking with the ship.

Nicky – But... exactly! At least that's what I believed...

Fred – So who the hell is this idiot?

Nicky – He's my chauffeur...

Fred – Are you kidding me?

Nicky – It was Sticky's idea.

Fred – I told you to be wary of her...

Nicky – Patrick Blank was supposed to be a scapegoat, to shoulder the party's baggage. But I wonder if this creature isn't slipping through our fingers.

Fred – Bravo... And now, what do you propose?

Nicky – I confess I don't know what to do anymore. Whatever we do to discredit him, it only makes him more popular with the electorate.

Fred – Anyway, we can't let this idiot become President.

Nicky – I believe it's time to seriously contemplate removing him from the presidential race for good...

Fred – Definitely?

Nicky – I'm going to call the Secretary of Homeland Security ...

Blackout.

Act 4

Nicky arrives with Alex.

Nicky – Did you see him on TV yesterday? He's making fun of us!

Alex – You have to admit, he's quite astonishing.

Nicky – Eliminating the Senate...! Did you feed him that absurd idea?

Alex – Not at all!

Nicky – I remind you that many of our supporters are senators. Percy called me, he's furious. It's true that if we were to eliminate the Senate, no one would notice, but still...

Alex – I don't know where he got that from... Maybe he's not as stupid as he seems after all...

Nicky – You told me he could barely read and write!

Alex – I don't know what's happened to him...

Nicky – Ever since he survived that assassination attempt, it's been worse than ever. He's leading in the polls for the second round. Can you believe it? Two-thirds of our fellow citizens are willing to vote for that idiot!

Alex – We have to admit, the secret service agents really messed up. The sniper who was supposed to shoot him in the head shot himself in the foot!

Nicky – Snipers! I don't understand... This guy has the luck of the devil; there's no other explanation. It's like he's under divine protection.

Alex – It's almost eerie. He's even bulletproof.

Nicky – He must have something to hide! We all have something to hide! A fictitious job, a Swiss bank account, a friend in the Kremlin...

Alex – Patrick Blank's life is a complete blank. It's as if nothing happened to him before he became a presidential candidate.

Nicky – Still, he must have parents. I don't know, an alcoholic father. A prostitute mother.

Alex – He's a child of social services. We don't know who his parents are. We have no idea where he comes from. Patrick Blank is the immaculate conception.

Nicky – Soon you'll be telling me he's the Messiah or the Antichrist.

Alex – Honestly, I'm not sure of anything anymore...

Nicky – You promised us a shipwreck. Following your advice, we abandoned the ship in a lifeboat. And here, the Titanic is still sailing towards America, carefully avoiding all the icebergs!

Alex – With a madman as the captain...

Nicky – We'll end up devouring each other in this damned lifeboat, mark my words...

Alex – You're right... We're trapped like rats... I mean... We'll find a solution...

Nicky – What a Plan C... What are you going to suggest now?

Alex – A Plan D?

Nicky – I'm warning you, I won't go through the entire alphabet.

Alex – I'm working on it, I promise...

Nicky – So, what's your Plan D then?

Alex – Negotiation.

Nicky – Negotiate with Patrick Blank? I remind you, he's my driver...

Alex – If we can't prevent his election... After all, he's the party's candidate, right? The one who was officially endorsed by our primaries.

Nicky – I'm not sure the right-wing will agree... It's not exactly the plan we sold them.

The phone rings. Nicky answers. in the speakers, Percy's voice is heard.

Percy – *What the hell is going on here? Are you planning to stab me in the back?*

Nicky – But, Percy, calm down. What are you talking about?

Percy – *You assured me your candidate was merely a scarecrow. Yet, you went ahead and got that foolish Frederica elected, believing we could manipulate her at will. The gullible puppet, that's how you put it...*

Fred arrives and overhears the last words.

Fred – So, I'm the gullible puppet you're talking about?

Nicky – Oh, hello, Frederica.

Fred – You really take me for a dumb, Nicky. But I warn you, if you do this to me, I'll rip your balls off.

Percy – *We're not even sure he has any... A person willing to change their gender just to improve their chances of winning an election! They're not averse to flipping sides...*

Nicky – I assure you I have nothing to do with this. But well, what matters now is finding a way out. All together...

Fred – All together... Listen to him, this two-faced hypocrite.

Percy – *Patrick Blank is leading in the polls. How do you plan to change that?*

Nicky – Calm down, Alexandra has a Plan D...

Fred – And that's supposed to reassure us? What mess is this now?

Alex – It's... It's a bit early to talk about it, but I'm working on it, believe me...

Percy – *You better, because our bosses are furious.*

Alex – Our bosses?

Percy – *The ones who really run this country. The owners of the largest companies in the country. Our masters, it's them!*

Nicky – Oh my God... What are they saying?

Percy – *They're threatening to cut off...*

Nicky – We must find a solution urgently... if we want to avoid paying for our custom suits out of our own pockets.

Alex – I'll see what I can do...

Nicky – And I advise you hurry, because the secret service snipers won't always shoot themselves in the foot.

Percy – *Fortunately, Blank doesn't have a program...*

Fred – I'm starting to wonder if that's precisely why he's so popular with the voters...

Nicky hangs up. Nicky, Alex and Fred exit. Patrick enters with Victoria.

Victoria – After all, if you were elected president, you couldn't do worse than the others...

Patrick – I think you're underestimating me, Victoria...

Victoria – Apparently, nothing can stop the voters from choosing you, we might as well have a program.

Patrick – A program, me? But what kind of program?

Victoria – I don't know... Do you have any ideas?

Patrick – What if we ask the people what they want?

Victoria – Because you think everyone wants the same thing? That would be too simple...

Patrick – So, what can we do?

Victoria – Until now, all presidents have tried not to displease anyone... by doing absolutely nothing.

Patrick – In that case, we might as well eliminate the President.

Victoria – Eliminate the President?

Patrick – No, I mean, not eliminate him with a bullet to the head. I mean eliminating the position, you know. If the guy is useless...

Victoria – There, you impress me, Patrick... That is indeed a revolutionary idea. After suggesting the elimination of the Senate... All that's left is to eliminate the Assembly, and we'll be close to the Restoration.

Patrick – Restoration? What does that have to do with restoration?

Victoria – The restoration of the monarchy! But a popular monarchy this time. With a sovereign from the people, like you. *(Her phone rings, and she answers.)* Yes? Yes, he's with me right now. Very well, I'll tell him right away... *(She hangs up.)* Sticky is looking for you.

Patrick *(nervous)* – Don't you want to stay with me?

Victoria – You're the candidate, Patrick. Now you'll have to face... *(Alex arrives.)* I'll leave you... But don't worry, I won't be far...

Victoria leaves. Alex arrives.

Alex – So, Patrick? Do you regret your job as a chauffeur?

Patrick – To be honest... yes, a little bit...

Alex – I can tell you now that you weren't my top choice in this election. But a presidential election is essentially a connection between one individual and the people, isn't it?

Patrick – Uh... yes.

Alex – And this people, Patrick, they see themselves in you. For better or for worse...

Patrick – Probably for worse, I'm well aware of that.

Alex – Don't underestimate yourself, dear! You're running a good campaign.

Patrick – I didn't even know I was running a campaign...

Alex – You didn't attend college, and does it really matter? One should acknowledge talent where it exists and foster it for the country's benefit! Our nation clearly needs a fresh political landscape, and you, Patrick, are a prime example of that renewal.

Patrick – If you say so...

She approaches him and grabs him by the shoulders.

Alex – I have complete faith in you, Patrick... Deep down, I've always believed that you were meant for a significant national role. Were you aware that I was the one who recommended your name to Riviera for the primaries?

Patrick – Uh... I didn't know that.

She steps back.

Alex – Nonetheless, you will require guidance from more experienced individuals. Given your lack of political experience, if, by chance, you do get elected, you'll need counsel. How about we navigate this journey together?

Patrick – Yes, why not?

Alex – Do you know the difference between politicians and voters?

Patrick – No.

Alex – Politicians often advocate "do as I say, not as I do."

Patrick – And the voters?

Alex – It's the same.

Patrick – Alright... So, there's no difference.

Alex – Exactly.

Patrick – But you asked if I knew the difference between...

Alex – It's a joke.

Patrick – Alright.

Alex – It implies, if you'd like to put it that way, that the public anticipates their elected officials to display a degree of integrity they themselves are unwilling to enforce.

Patrick – Got it...

Alex – Come with me, I'll try to explain it further...

They exit. Nicky and Angel arrive.

Nicky – I wonder if we haven't reached the end of something, anyway...

Percy – Do you think so?

Nicky – After all the effort we've put into this...

Percy – Yes... (*A moment of silence*) Are you speaking seriously, or...

Nicky – I don't even know anymore... That's the problem...

Percy – However, I think you're right... Left, right... It's all outdated.

Nicky – They're the same ones who criticize the power of money and demand higher purchasing power!

Percy – Anyway, our sponsors are furious.

Nicky – Our sponsors?

Percy – Did I say that? I apologize... I meant our supporters.

Nicky – If I had to make a choice, I'd lean towards "sponsors," to be frank. After all, it's a term employed for athletes chasing after a title and a medal, so why not for politicians in pursuit of a position and an accolade?

Percy – Still... Can you imagine wearing suits in the colours of the companies that pay us?

Nicky – You're right, it would be a bit flashy... and not very elegant.

They exit. Alex returns with Victoria.

Alex – We got off on the wrong foot, the two of us, and I'm sorry for that, believe me.

Victoria – What exactly do you expect from me?

Alex – For reasons that elude me, it appears you hold some sway over Patrick. Would you consider teaming up with us?

Victoria – Teaming up?

Alex – Help him understand that the suit is too big for him. You'll agree that if that idiot were to become president, the Republic would be in danger.

Victoria – Of course, with you, there would be no risk...

Alex – We would know how to reward you.

Victoria – Oh, really?

Alex – You won't be a secretary for the rest of your life.

Victoria – I'm an assistant.

Alex – You're worth more than that, Sabrina.

Victoria – My name is Victoria...

Alex – You won't deal ungrateful people, I assure you... How about a secretary position in the next government?

Victoria – I am an assistant, as I just told you.

Alex – No, I meant... a Secretary of State. (*Victoria seems a bit puzzled.*) I'll let you think about my offer...

Alex leaves. Patrick arrives.

Patrick – They're offering me a deal.

Victoria – Well, well...

Patrick – I withdraw in favour of Uberman, and I'll become a secretary in the next government. A secretary, can you believe it?

Victoria – Would you have preferred to be a minister, then?

Patrick – Not at all! I had trouble just being a driver, but a secretary... I'm not sure I'm up to it. I'm not like you. I've never been very good at spelling, and I don't know how to type.

Victoria – Don't worry, to be a Secretary of State, you don't even need to know how to read and write.

Patrick – So, do you advise me to accept, then?

She approaches him with a seductive smile.

Victoria – I think you're worth more than that, Patrick...

Patrick – But then what should I do?

Victoria – Do you trust me?

Patrick – Blindly, Victoria.

He falls into a cataplexy.

Blackout

Act 5

Patrick and Victoria arrive. Victoria steps aside to let him pass.

Victoria – Mr. President, after you...

Patrick – 97% of the votes! This can't be possible. There must be some mistake somewhere...

Victoria – No candidate has ever been elected in this country with such a majority!

Patrick – I don't understand what's happening to me... It scares me, Victoria...

Victoria – Indeed, a majority like that... it doesn't align with the image of a typical president. It might even serve as inspiration for any would-be dictator...

Patrick – I remind you I promised to resign immediately after being elected.

Victoria – Yes. And to abolish the presidential function.

Patrick – It was precisely after making that unfortunate commitment that my popularity skyrocketed.

Victoria – Indeed, it was your only campaign argument.

Patrick – I thought I would discourage voters from selecting me... Electing someone who pledges to resign if they win the elections... It doesn't make sense!

Victoria – Obviously, our fellow citizens are tired of strongman leaders.

Patrick – Or maybe our fellow citizens are idiots.

Victoria – That's also a possibility, unfortunately...

Patrick – Anyway, I made a promise. Tomorrow, I won't be president anymore...

Victoria – To avoid a power vacuum and a political crisis, it would be more responsible to wait until the legislative elections...

Patrick – Do you think so...?

Victoria – It's certain. Even afterward... If you decided to stay a bit longer, you wouldn't be the first to break your campaign promises.

Patrick – Well, I did give my word... It's democracy, isn't it?

Victoria – Many dictators started by being elected, you know...

Patrick – Now, you're the one scaring me, Victoria... Are you joking or...?

Victoria – I must admit, I'm not entirely sure anymore...

Patrick – Me neither... I wasn't prepared for this... It's normal that it could muddle one's mind

Victoria – That's true... Being president is a huge responsibility. Consider that now, you're the commander-in-chief of the armed forces.

Patrick – I didn't even do military service... I was exempted due to my narcolepsy...

Victoria – Fortunately, there's no medical examination required to become the president of the Republic. Even if you were completely insane, you could still trigger a nuclear war! By the way, have they given you the code yet?

Patrick – The code...?

Victoria – The secret code! For the bomb!

Patrick – Uh, no... Well, I haven't checked my text messages.

He checks his mobile phone.

Victoria – It's true that sometimes one thinks the world would be better off if we got rid of half of it.

Patrick – Yes... But which half? My inbox is completely full...

He puts away his mobile phone.

Victoria – You're right, that's a bit radical... Otherwise, you also have the right to a certain number of targeted assassinations.

Patrick – Excuse me?

Victoria – You provide a list to the secret services, and they take care of everything.

Patrick – You're right, I think we're going crazy...

Victoria – But it would only be one or two a month.

Patrick – Alright... Sort of like a subscription, in a way. But we mustn't exceed the limit...

Victoria – Exactly...

Patrick – That actually reassures me...

Victoria – No paperwork to sign. No one to report to. In and out without a trace.

Patrick – Yes... It's probably how I almost got assassinated twice... But they seem so clumsy. It's lucky there were no collateral damages...

Victoria – Well, I do have a small idea of who I'd put at the top of the list...

Patrick – Could we stop talking about this? It's making me a bit nervous...

Victoria – Alright... However, now that you're the commander-in-chief of the national ship, Patrick, you'll sail through storms. Face pressures. Perhaps even deal with mutinies...

Patrick – That's why I fully intend to leave the ship as soon as possible...

Victoria – Of course, but before the results of the legislative elections, a lot can happen, you know...

Patrick – That's why I still need you by my side, Victoria... More than ever...

They draw closer and are about to kiss. But the phone rings. Victoria composes herself and answers.

Victoria – Yes? Yes, Mr. President. I'll put you through immediately... *(To Patrick)*
The President...

Patrick – Ah, see, it's not me...

Victoria – The former President. To congratulate you on your election...

Patrick – Ah... *(He takes the receiver)* Yes, Mr. President... Thank you, Mr. President... Of course, Mr. President... Goodbye, Mr. President...

He hangs up, incredulous.

Victoria – Well? Did he give you the code?

Patrick – Is there a code to enter the Presidential Palace?

Victoria – The nuclear code!

Patrick – No, but this is an obsession...

Victoria – I apologize.

Patrick – Do you really think it was him?

Victoria – Who, him?

Patrick – The President! It could be a hoax! This whole thing could be a gigantic hoax... Or, you know, a play!

Victoria – In that case, the whole world is a stage, as Shakespeare said.

Patrick – So, I'm not dreaming...

Victoria – Unless life is but a dream, as Calderon said.

Patrick – Could you please stop with the quotes? I'm not sure that's helping me much...

Victoria – I'm sorry... In the meantime, you're officially the President of the Republic... Do you have any specific wishes for the inauguration ceremony?

Patrick – Will I have to swear on the Bible?

Victoria – We're not in the United States...

Patrick – So, what do we swear on in this country?

Victoria – On the Who's who! However, if you have a favourite singer, now is the time to see her live.

Patrick – I quite like Celine Dion... Do you think that would be possible?

Victoria – Why not? In any case, there's no escaping it. Might as well enjoy yourself a bit.

Patrick – Alright... Let's go with Celine Dion... I'll resign right after... And I'm counting on you to make sure I keep my promise!

Victoria – I'll make sure... Even though it will be tough for me too... I already saw myself as the first lady...

Patrick – I'm really sorry, but... (*Understanding*) First lady? Do you mean that...?

Victoria – I've always dreamed of having a man with nuclear power in my bed.

They passionately kiss, and they're even about to do it on the table. Alex arrives.

Alex – I'm sorry, I didn't mean to disturb you.

Patrick – No, you're not disturbing us at all...

Victoria – Well, maybe a little... What do you want?

Alex (to Patrick) – First of all, congratulations on this brilliant victory.

Patrick – Thank you...

Alex – A victory to which, it must be said, I'm not entirely a stranger...

Victoria – Patrick survived two assassination attempts...

Alex – I was, for my part, completely opposed to that unfortunate initiative, believe me.

Patrick – Alright, and then?

Alex – Well, we need to prepare for what comes next... You're not seriously considering resigning, are you?

Patrick – I made a commitment to our fellow citizens.

Alex – Of course... And it's important for a politician to keep his promises.

Patrick – We agree on that.

Alex – You promised to resign, but you didn't specify when. After all, there's nothing stopping you from resigning a few weeks before the end of your term.

Patrick – Surely that's not what my voters had in mind when they voted for me.

Alex – You're just starting out, which is perfectly normal. However, you'll need to learn how to manipulate words to some extent. Honouring your promises, yes, but remember, words are just words. With a bit of experience, you can make words convey any message you desire.

Patrick – You think so...

Alex – Of course! It's a bit like with women, if I may. Do you know women, Patrick? When they say no, it might mean maybe, and when they say maybe, it means yes.

Victoria – And when they say "screw you"?

Alex – Politicians are the opposite. When they promise, it might mean maybe, and when they say maybe, it means never.

Patrick – I don't know, I... What do you think, Victoria?

Alex – Come on, Patrick! You're the President now. You're not going to ask for advice from... a secretary. Even if you seem quite close, from what I've gathered...

Victoria – I think you're misinformed. I am the future First Lady. In this role, I plan to stand by my husband's side to assist him in making informed decisions. Isn't that correct, Patrick?

Patrick – Of course, sweetheart.

Alex – My apologies. I assume this marriage proposal is rather recent. I can see that you might still be caught up in your emotions... We can revisit this conversation later.

She leaves.

Victoria – I'm sorry I jumped the gun a bit on your marriage proposal... But I'm listening...

Patrick – Do you want to marry me, Victoria?

Victoria – Yes... (*They kiss.*) I love men who take the initiative. You have the soul of a leader, Patrick, I knew it from the first time I saw you.

Patrick – Really?

Victoria – Come with me. I'm going to teach you a few things you don't seem to know yet...

They leave, embracing tenderly. Nicky arrives with Percy. Nicky, with his arm in a cast, also has a bandage on his forehead.

Nicky – What if we just spill the beans?

Percy – Everything?

Nicky – That this guy is nothing but a domestic worker. Just a chauffeur! We even have a contract signed by his own hand...

Percy – Yes... But that would mean we deliberately deceived our voters!

Nicky – You're right... You're right... So, it's screwed... Our country is screwed... Well, at least we are screwed...

Percy – Fortunately, this idiot doesn't have a majority yet... We can hope to recover in the legislative elections.

Nicky – It's not that easy. Now, he has a program.

Percy – Let's talk about his program. Eliminating the position for which he was just elected! With 97% of the votes...

Nicky – I still don't understand how we got to this point... But well, the voters will soon get tired of him, just like all the others.

Percy shows him a newspaper.

Percy –

At the moment, it doesn't appear that way... See! Since his election, the mood of our fellow citizens has significantly improved, and he hasn't even taken any action yet!

Nicky – The economy is going to collapse, you'll see.

Percy – The stock market went up 10% yesterday...

Nicky – The world of finance is not the real economy.

Percy – The unemployment figures just came out. For the first time in years, they've significantly improved. He's turned the tide even before being elected!

Nicky – Are you suggesting this guy is a wizard?

Percy – To be honest, I'm starting to wonder if we haven't made a deal with the devil... What's that bandage on your head?

Nicky – The second attempt to get rid of that idiot... I don't know why they call them snipers. It's me they nearly killed.

Percy – I think you should stop with these targeted assassinations. They'll end up killing someone. But it won't be Patrick...

They exit. Patrick and Victoria arrive, with Alex. Patrick looks a bit disheveled after the lesson Victoria just gave him.

Patrick – Okay, I'm listening...

Alex – You have to admit you don't have much experience in running the state.

Patrick – So far, the only thing I drove was Mr. Riviera's car. And usually, it ended up crashing into a wall.

Alex – If I can be of use... I'm willing to give myself completely to our homeland.

Victoria – But when you say give yourself, I assume it's just a figure of speech, right?

Alex – If you prefer not to have my emoluments reflected in your accounts, we can certainly work out an arrangement..

Victoria – I see...

Alex – In that case, I'm at your disposal right now. What can I do to start?

Victoria – To start? Go get me a coffee. Do you know where the machine is?

Alex – You're right, public service is first and foremost a school of humility. And we've all forgotten that for too long...

Victoria – Short, no sugar, please. (*Alex is about to leave.*) Could you also bring me the newspapers?

Alex – Of course...

Alex exits.

Patrick – Weren't you a bit harsh on her?

Victoria – I remind you she tried to kill you twice.

Patrick – It's true, I forgot...

Victoria – Well, now let's get to work, Patrick. We have a country to pull out of the crisis.

Patrick – You're scaring me, Victoria... I hope you're not referring to the nuclear button...

Victoria – Stop talking about that; it turns me on.

They embrace again, but Alex returns with the coffee.

Alex – Here's your coffee... I also brought you the newspapers... You'll see, it's enlightening...

Victoria takes a look at the newspaper, and her face freezes.

Patrick – You look troubled...

Victoria – Here, read this.

Patrick takes a look at the newspaper, and his face turns pale.

Patrick – Born deaf and mute, he hears a speech by Patrick Blank on the radio and starts singing the national anthem. This is a joke...

Alex grabs another newspaper and reads the headline.

Alex – A blind man regains his sight after shaking Patrick Blank's hand during his last campaign rally.

Victoria – Seeing Patrick Blank pass by on the street during a parade, he gets up from his wheelchair and follows him to the polling station.

Alex – Catholics are calling for your beatification. Look at the newspaper headlines! They already call you Saint Patrick...

Patrick – This is all going too far... People must know the truth now...

Alex – Know what?

Patrick – That I'm just an impostor!

Alex – Don't even think about it!

Patrick – And why not?

Alex – They see you as the Messiah!

Victoria – It's true, it would be cruel to disappoint them now...

Alex – They have faith in you, Patrick!

Patrick – I feel like this is going to end very badly.

Alex – No, no...

Patrick – Anyway, for the Messiah, things ended very badly.

Alex – Here, read this. They no longer want your resignation. They want you as president for life.

Victoria shows another newspaper.

Victoria – Some even talk about restoring the monarchy... They've already dubbed you Patrick the First.

Patrick – It's the first time I'll be first at something... It's a nightmare... What should I do?

Alex – Now you have no choice, my dear. You must continue performing miracles. Otherwise, they will really crucify you...

She exits.

Patrick – Do you really think I can perform miracles?

Victoria – No... But we can always proceed with targeted assassinations...

Patrick – What a bunch of fools...

Victoria – Yes, but those fools declare you as their king, Patrick. Destiny is inevitable, and it seems yours was undeniably a national one. In my heart, I've always had faith in you...

They move closer to each other.

Patrick – Well... Then I shall be their king. Would you be my queen, Victoria?

Victoria – It would be an honour, Patrick.

Lights and wedding music. Patrick and Victoria each take a paper crown. They crown each other and kiss.

Patrick – The king of fools and his queen. Do you really think we're legitimate, Victoria?

Victoria – Believe me, Patrick, our fellow countrymen finally have the government they deserve.

Patrick falls into catalepsy. Victoria looks at him, somewhat surprised.

Blackout.

The End.

About the author

Born in 1955 in Auvers-sur-Oise (France), Jean-Pierre Martinez was first a drummer for several rock bands before becoming a semiologist in advertising. He then began a career writing television scripts before turning to theatre and writing plays. He has written close to a hundred scripts for television and as many plays, some of which have already become classics (*Friday the 13th*, *Strip Poker*). He is one of the most produced contemporary playwrights in France and in other francophone countries. Several of his plays are also available in Spanish and English, and are regularly produced in the United States and Latin America.

Amateur and professional theatre groups looking for plays to perform can download Jean-Pierre Martinez's plays for free from his website La Comédiathèque (<https://comediatheque.net/>). However, public productions are subject to SACD filing.

For those who prefer reading or working from books, printed versions of his plays can be purchased from Amazon for a price similar to that of photocopying this document.

Other plays by the same author translated in English:

A Cuckoo's nest
A simple business dinner
All's well that starts badly
An innocent little murder
Bed and Breakfast
Casket for two
Cheaters
Check to the Kings
Crash Zone
Crisis and Punishment
Critical but stable
Eurostar
Four stars
Fragile, handle with care
Friday the 13th
Heads or Tails
Him and Her
In lieu of flowers
Is there a pilot in the audience?
Is there an author in the audience?
Just a moment before the end of the world
Last chance encounter
Lovestruck at Swindlemore Hall
Miracle at Saint Mary Juana Abbey
New Year's Eve at the Morgue
One marriage out of two
Preliminaries
Quarantine
Running on Empty
Strip Poker
Surviving Mankind
The Costa Mucho Castaways
The Ideal Son-in-Law
The Jackpot
The Joker
The perfect Son-in-Law
The Performance is not cancelled
The Smell of Money
The Window across the courtyard
The Worst Village in England
Welcome aboard!

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