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THE BEST EUROPEAN SHOW

v.6

(In collaboration with Sean Buhagiar)

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CAST

RICHARD - President of EP; Brussels' political star

MIA - a director of the Festival of the European Theatre; a famous festival director and curator;

EDEN - an intern, assistant to the jury;

PHILIP - a co-leader of the *Radical Audience Warriors (RAW)* rioting against the low quality of the European Theatre shows

ESMERALDA - Police inspector.

Jury members:

BEATRICE - a playwright, feminist, super-strict, over-professional, President of the Jury.

E. I. GROTOWSKI - an experienced director; he believes in theatre and its powers to make the world to become a better place.

MILA - a young promising actress;

JANUS - a theatre producer;

KOVACH - a conservative MEP; chair of the EP Family Values Committee;

ZOH - a liberal MEP; an IT engineer; a Vice-Chair of the EP Public Relations Committee

VIA - a genius composer

PROLOGUE

RICHARD:

Shakespeare aptly articulated it:
The time is out of joint
Yet, since Hamlet has ceased,
to set it right - let us find
Merriment within this turmoil,
Within this den of lions
Calling itself: Europe,
Where my adversary's adversary,
In turn, becomes mine; for in a realm
Where trust is but an elusive spectre,
No comrade or ally is above suspicion,
And no transgression attains
Retribution. No wrongdoing
Receives a fair response.
Justice! - what form does fairness
Assume in this world
Unjust and sombre?

Much like common mass murderers,
War criminals are made celebrities,
Thus, why does the pilfering of crumbs
- here and there - evoke a mortal sin?
Such ruminations occupy
My political peers as they extend
Their hands to grasp
the not-so-forbidden-anymore fruit
Now pleasantly reachable
Experiencing a thrill akin
To Eve in Eden

Elected officials and appointed
Custodians alike, who revel
In being anointed with gold,
Personify the true tapestry
Of European diversity:

Some opt for the whirl
Of Panama laundromats,
Others solicit favours
From drug magnates,
In return for Luxury SUV's and branded
Confections micro dosed on
magic mushrooms

Certain politicians indulge
In fragrances, cigars,
Cognac, and opulent hotels,
Basking in massages
While another cohort favours
Yachts bestowed by pharmaceutical
Tycoons and blood diamonds gifted
By arms merchants.

Then, there are those who
favour the grace of digital behemoths',
As petroleum oligarchs extend their
Generosity to politicians in symbiotic
Partnerships gifting private jets.

Make no mistake, this is no bribe!
Merely a token or two,
A benign gesture, rewarding
The kindly aid politicians bestow
In the relentless arena of
A cut-throat market.

As for me, I harbour a fondness
For arts and sports
Having enjoyed the spectacle
Of the Qatar World Cup,
Amongst football and tennis legends
All mingling amidst smirking sheiks
And their many wives

Those smiling masters of migrant
Labourers who perished erecting
Their stadiums - numbering thousands!
Alas, but a minor detail.

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Amidst my icons, I realised:
I am not alone.
For myself, I harbour two cravings
Shared by many - Power and Money,
But I, am privy to strategies,
And covert paths, seizing the splendour
of opportunity and fate's providence.

As the President of the European Parliament,
I gaze down on MEPs
From my throne's pinnacle,
Giving them no cause to question
My integrity there in the ethereal highlands
Of noble disposition.
I resolved to absolve
My pardonable mischief
through the notion of inaugurating
The foremost European Theatre Festival,
Modelled upon the Eurovision contest.
An ingenious conception

The liberal lobbies are presently
Decaying as the darkness marches,
darkly advancing
Those liberal losers will see in me
A harbinger of Unity,
A prophet of Green Rosy Visions,
Aiding my bold ascension,
To rule the Commission's helm!

This eve, the inaugural
European Theatre Festival
Approaches its culmination
With but one query - Who's is
The Best European Show?
Who shall triumph?
But of course, After I.

THEATRE UNION STAGE

Mia, Beatrice, Zoh, Via, Mila, Grotowski and Kovach are waiting on stage. Eden is standing behind them.

ZOH:

Merdre!

VIA:

I can't believe I dedicated three of weeks of my time, my work, my... life for this

ZOH:

For what?

VIA:

For this festival!

We have to finish by midnight I need to go to my tree-hugging meditation. It's the supermoon tonight.

KOVACH:

Fanatical Vegan.

VIA:

And proud!

Janus enters.

JANUS:

Apologies, I barely made it through. So many people outside the theatre, the police and ambulances. The entrance is barricaded I had to go through the back.

Apparently, there's some strikes happening or something.

MILA:

Yeah I saw! What's going on? There were a few protesters outside the theatre when I came in.

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JANUS :

I took a video.

MIA :

Nowadays, everyone protests against everything.
Glad you made it through bunny. We can start.

JANUS :

Mia - Who is getting married today?

MIA :

Never mind. To make a long story short ... They actually rented out the theatre for a wedding earlier today and they did not manage it to clear it up in time.
The technicians are on strike. We will just have to make do with what there is. But it looks nice after all, right?

KOVACH

Mia, can we start?

MIA

Yes. Let's begin. Esteemed members of the Jury, over the last three weeks, we've witnessed 45 shows from 52 countries.

KOVACH

Sorry dear but as a director of the first European festival You and us, we deserve a round of applause.

(All applaud mockingly)

MIA :

Tonight we have the great responsibility of choosing ... The Best European Theatre Show Award.

MILA :

Why wasn't there a voting system like Eurovision? Everything else seems so similar to Eurovision nowadays.

KOVACH :

A very stupid idea.

MIA :

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Mila, please. Beatrice, our jury president, would you kindly commence?

BEATRICE:

I officially open the final session of the Official Jury for the first European Theatre Festival. All participating countries selected their best theatre show to represent them here in Brussels.

We had instances where two or more countries united sending co-produced plays, allowed by the Festival's rules of course. Similar to Eurovision, the shows were from EU member states and also included countries like ...

KOVACH:

Yeah, we know the states ...

BEATRICE:

Andorra, Moldova, Monaco, Belarus, Iceland, Balkan countries, Norway, Lichtenstein, Switzerland, San Marino, Azerbaijan, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Kazakhstan, Israel ...

JANUS:

But not Palestine.

BEATRICE:

Ukraine, and Great Britain. Russia was not invited.

ZOH:

You forgot the Vatican's stand-up comedy. Quite amusing.

BEATRICE:

Thank you, I overlooked it; the Vatican is also a contender.

JANUS:

Why are Kazakhstan and Azerbaijan part of Europe, while Algeria and Morocco are not? I don't quite grasp this Logic.

VIA:

Because of the gas pipeline.

BEATRICE:

We didn't select the countries, Europe is whatever the committee decides.

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JANUS:

Which committee?

BEATRICE:

So, the committee...

JANUS:

But which committee?

BEATRICE:

Mia, please ...

MIA:

Richard is the Chairman of The Festival's Board of Directors.

ZOH:

And also the President of The European Parliament, may I remind you.

MIA:

Indeed, he determined the participating countries ...

KOVACH:

Impressive, the "demiurge" invented the festival and chose the countries too.

BEATRICE:

Given that we are awarding just one prize for this festival ... The Best European Show Award ...

MIA:

It's 100,000 euros - public money. And an NFT Trophy.

BEATRICE:

... We need to act responsibly. Tonight, we have to announce the result - the whole of Europe is waiting.

GROTOWSKI:

May I suggest that we livestream our deliberations? Let's make this process completely transparent

(Silence in the room.)

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MIA:

Did you suggest we livestream this deliberation?

GROTOWSKI:

Yes.

BEATRICE:

I mean, I've never heard of streaming a jury's deliberation or making them open to the public.

ZOH:

Very democratic! We should do it! Thank you, Grotowski for the excellent idea!

VIA:

Come on, Zoh! You don't understand the world of Theatre. They would destroy us.

BEATRICE:

And on top of that we'll hold back if we know we're being watched.

GROTOWSKI:

Does your opinion change based on who's listening?

BEATRICE:

No, but you know how it goes. We can be pretty harsh sometimes.

KOVACH:

No jury has ever been streamed Why start now?

VIA:

I don't want to be recorded.

ZOH:

You can sit off-camera!

GROTOWSKI:

This is the inaugural European Theatre Festival. One couldn't ask for a better opportunity to set a new standard. Theatre

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makers and the audience should be aware of what we think about their work.

MILA:

It sounds weird. But I love the idea. Why not?

ZOH:

Exactly. Why not?

VIA:

I'm not doing this. It wasn't in the contract!

MIA:

Via is right, kittens. We haven't considered this ... And it wouldn't be feasible to set up the equipment ...

VIA:

I don't want to become a reality TV star!

KOVACH:

You should start an OnlyFans account. The European audience would adore you, Via!

MIA:

Just to make it absolutely clear, there will be no streaming. And that's final. Beatrice, please continue.

BEATRICE:

Very well ... I think we should apply a *via negativa* methodology and eliminate shows that can't be considered the best show for any reason.

JANUS:

Let's pause for a moment and consider what we're doing here. We have a European Theatre Festival, funded by the European Union, where even Georgia can participate. Not to mention Israel ... And now we have a shortlist that includes three non-EU countries: Turkey, UK, and Ukraine ... Meanwhile, we've left out The Danish musical ...

EVERYBODY:

Not again!

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JANUS :

A remarkable story directed by Thomas Vinterberg, starring superstars like Nicolaj Coster-Waldau and Viggo Mortensen! How can you disregard "Little Mermaid 6," which was exceptional?!

VIA:

The music was atrocious.

BEATRICE:

We just have been through this, Janus.

KOVACH:

We discussed this about one hundred times already.

MILA:

Maybe we could add the Danish show to the shortlist?

GROTOWSKI :

I must say: I suffer from chronic insomnia. And during Little Mermaid 6, I had The best sleep of my life.

MIA:

Good for you. Right. Just to be clear we won't be adding anything. Beatrice please ...

BEATRICE:

Okay ... Can we not revisit this? And the shortlist is the same as yesterday, considering the three shows we saw today were mediocre.

MIA:

Wait a moment, Richard is calling! Hi, Richard...
... Yes, of course. Just a second.

(Eden puts Richard video to a large screen.)

We've prepared something really special for you. Just wait and listen ... as we practised. Come on, darlings.

(Song.)

I'm sorry we really practised!

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RICHARD: (video call)

Great, wonderful guys, I wanted to say hello to you before you begin ... But my security team wouldn't let me enter the theatre. Some protocol during riots ... We'll sort that out ... I just wanted to tell you that you have a truly crucial task tonight. Choose very wisely, as the future of Europe rests in your hands!

MIA:

Thank you, Richard.

RICHARD (video):

I'll be there as soon as possible!

EDEN:

The signal seems to have gone and the wi-fi is not working here.

BEATRICE:

Okay, let's get to work. The first shortlisted show is "The Sick Man of Europe," a UK entry dealing with Brexit.

(Video - UK.)

KOVACH:

It was funny, but very pretentious, too much discussion on slavery, imperialism, colonialism ... It was excessively didactic and... woke, I must say the actors were very cute.

ZOH:

I quite liked how they avoided cultural appropriation. They are perhaps the most multicultural country in Europe today.

EDEN:

That's stretching it.

MIA:

Honey!

KOVACH: *(Mockingly)*

They also cast disabled actors for the disabled roles, autistic actors for the autistic characters.

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JANUS :

And you forgot the LGBT actors for LGBT parts.

MIA :

It was definitely very inclusive but maybe that's not Art?

BEATRICE :

It's about equal opportunity's Mia!

GROTOWSKI :

And what about the big Q, if I may?

BEATRICE :

You mean queer?

GROTOWSKI :

No. Quality.

BEATRICE :

Quality is not the matter here. It can be a top-notch production also because of its inclusivity.

JANUS :

A great actor can play any character.

GROTOWSKI :

The very nature of acting lies there. That's the art! You can play a delicate flower, a fiery bumblebee, a homosexual Cinderella, or a disabled person. You can play whatever character you create. That's the whole point of artistic integrity. An artist should only be loyal to his art. The Big-Q: Yes, Quality.

ZOH :

Hold on. Are we going back to being okay with blackface?

GROTOWSKI :

No, that's very different.

MILA :

What were those black people called in the show? It was so hilarious! You remember the scene with The Prince farting? ... My indigenous people of Australia, I need to apologise to you

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for many, many, many years of enslaving you. I can't remember what they were called.

EDEN:

Aboriginals.

MILA:

Yeah, the Originals... Haha! The original people. He farted exactly while giving the speech. How did the actor even manage that?

EDEN:

Ab- ...

MILA:

Excuse me?

EDEN:

Not the Originals, but the Aboriginals.

MILA:

Alright, but that's not the point. Farting is the point.

GROTOWSKI:

The point is that you could see how Great Britain moved from making a colossal empire to making a colossal mistake – Brexit. But the problem for me was that the show relied heavily on this literature at the expense of engaging theatrical form.

JANUS:

Yes! Grotowski, thank you. It's a common issue in most contemporary shows. In European Theatre – Words, words, words! Exhausting! Just like our conversation here. It's tedious. Can anyone see this show as The Best European Show?

KOVACH:

Absolutely not!

JANUS:

Alright, then it's settled. We can remove it from the list and move on.

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MIA:

Yes, let's do that.

BEATRICE:

Wait. We can't dismiss this show so hastily.

KOVACH:

Why not?

BEATRICE:

The director is female, black, and lesbian.

GROTOWSKI:

And you want us to milk the sacred cow?

BEATRICE:

Oh, Grotowski, that was quite sexist.

JANUS: *(teasingly)*

It was also misogynistic, racist and homophobic - all in one go. Wow, Mr. Grotowski, the Big Three!

KOVACH:

Yes, the big three! Imagine her to be a Muslim too? We would have four, Poker, Mr Grotowski!

BEATRICE: *(to the guys)*

You're disgusting, you know that? And yes, she is a Muslim.

MIA:

That's exactly why we can't livestream this!

GROTOWSKI:

Ladies, it was just a witticism. Beatrice - You're the epitome of political Correctness.

VIA:

I agree with Beatrice. There are only two Women directors among the shortlist, and this one, Abi Omi did a great job here.

ZOH:

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Abi Omi being the only director of colour in this festival. It speaks volumes about European theatre.

MIA:

We can't give an award solely based on someone's gender, sexuality or ethnicity.

BEATRICE:

Just as we can't award someone simply for being an old white man.

JANUS: (*Teasingly.*)

How about a young white man?

MIA:

We're selecting the Best European Show. We're neither a political nor a social judging panel.

MILA:

Everything looks good on black people. Any colour, any style, it always suits them. And they sing so well! They excel in sports, they're better than the whites, in everything ...

MIA:

Mila, please.

MILA:

Fine ... Except for skiing ...

MIA:

Mila, let's return to the topic.

MILA:

Okay. I didn't understand why the show was titled "The Sick Man of Europe."

GROTOWSKI:

After 500 years of dominance, the Ottoman Empire ... The Turkish Empire ... Fell. During this fall, The Russians first referred to it as "The Sick Man of Europe."

MILA:

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Russians, Turkish, English. You sound like a conspiracy video!

GROTOWSKI:

Mila. In this show, they suggest that the New Sick Man of Europe is the UK. It's the end of The British Empire. Metaphorically speaking.

EDEN:

It's not a metaphor. Brexit was the suicide of a country. Sorry to interject.

MIA:

Please, pumpkin. Let's move on to Ukraine.

BEATRICE:

We are not moving on just yet.
We have not decided whether to kill the UK or not.

MIA:

But I don't recall anybody championing it.

MILA:

But nobody outright hated it either.

VIA:

And let's not forget our support for female directors!

ZOH:

Shall we put it to a vote then?

BEATRICE:

Alright, let's vote. Pollice verso or verso Pollice.

(Zoh, Via, Mila, Beatrice and Grotowski in favour, Janus and Kovach vote against.)

BEATRICE:

So that's 5 in favour, 2, against. Which means the UK performance remains in competition. Let's move on to Ukraine.

MIA:

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Honestly, though - The Brexit show? Grotowski, you yourself mentioned that it was too verbose and lacked the big Q!

GROTOWSKI :

I did.

MIA :

So you're going against your own principles? I've known you for ages and I think you've never done that before. Why now? What happened? Did everyone's newfound love for minorities take over our common sense?

GROTOWSKI :

Well ... The performance had its intriguing moments.

MIA :

Intriguing? Come on. You yourself just said that being a black and lesbian doesn't automatically make you a great theatre director.

GROTOWSKI :

Okay. You got me here Mia. I admit it. I was torn. I should have just voted against.

BEATRICE :

So, Grotowski - does your opinion change based on who you are talking to?

MIA :

And Beatrice - as a president of the jury - you can't impose your personal views on all of them. As much as we all adore Abi Omi, it seems like you're unreasonably biased. Your duty is to represent the entire European theatre scene, not just a segment, or a minority. We're here to elect the Best European Show, and this certainly wasn't it, right, Mr. Grotowski?

GROTOWSKI :

No.

BEATRICE :

I think ... I mean ... We do need to trim down the shortlist to find the truly outstanding ones. If Grotowski and I vote

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against it, that means there are three votes in favour and four against, which means the UK is out.

ZOH:

What just happened?!

MIA:

Darlings, ultimately, the country that betrayed the EU you cannot win the first European Theatre festival. Simple as that.

MILA:

We just killed UK. We should have given the award to Abi Omi.

BEATRICE:

Let's move on to Ukraine.

(Video - UKRAINE.)

MIA:

Ukraine's adaptation of "Ajax" by Sophocles was a ritualistic take on a Greek classic. Raw, energetic ... and mysterious at times ...

KOVACH:

Initially, I thought it was about the Dutch football club Ajax, or the laundry detergent brand.

ZOH:

Kovach, always a joker.

GROTOWSKI:

"Ajax" is a Romanized transliteration. The original name is "Aiai," onomatopoeic for a lament, "Aiai, my name is a lament." What a line!

MILA:

Mr. Grotowski, are you okay?

GROTOWSKI:

Never mind.

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BEATRICE:

It was a well-done, captivating ancient tale of betrayal between army generals during a war against their common enemy. What was truly courageous is the Ukrainian company's rendition.

Rather than focusing on Russia, they turned their critical gaze towards their own leaders, unveiling corruption. This is what the arts should always strive to do - reveal the truth, even when it's uncomfortable.

JANUS:

I haven't seen it in this show.

VIA:

Me neither.

JANUS:

They just went overboard with the blood and guts, throwing in some extra "masculine" vibes for the sake of epic fights. I must admit, the chorus actors were all like Adonis on steroids, but that's pretty much it.

KOVACH:

Yeah! Like topless Ajax footballers.

VIA:

The music was good. But the true issue lies in the underdeveloped female characters, which could very well stem from the fact that the playwright, the dramaturg and director are all male.

ZOH:

Via, let's be fair. There were only two female characters: Athena, the goddess who appeared briefly, and Tecmessa, Ajax's concubine, a minor role!

VIA:

Tecmessa is the mother of Ajax's child! The mother is never a minor role!

GROTOWSKI:

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They placed the action in Ukraine today. They had a fierce rhythm making the proximity of war palpable. You could feel the war around you. Like Artaud's theatre of cruelty...

EDEN:

It wasn't.

GROTOWSKI:

Yet, they veered into propaganda during The second part; I concur with that.

(Eden exits.)

MILA:

Never been in war, it like, totally showed how fucking brutal war can be, when Ajax killed himself with his blood flooding over the whole Ukrainian army. It fucked up my head. It hit me right in the feels.

KOVACH:

Oh give me a break! This was propaganda. They wanted to impress Europe so they went for some old, exotic pseudo-Slavic roots. Just like their Eurovision songs, full of pompous mysticism.

(Kovach playfully sings the chorus of Ruslana's Eurovision song "Wild Dances" and Kalush Orchestra's "Stefania." Laughter ensues.)

Bullshit songs, catchy songs, pompous.

VIA:

I agree with Kovach, they used stereotypes throughout.

JANUS:

I agree. This emperor is clearly naked, relying on the war sympathy card.

ZOH:

Are we all turning a blind eye? This is Ukraine. What kind of performance did you expect from a war-torn nation at such a festival?

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KOVACH:

Their President is a comedian. Yes they used the same trick. He played for a compassionate win, simple as that.

MILA:

I am compassionate! We should give them the award because it's a country grappling with real war! We should do like Eurovision.

ZOH:

Being compassionate is not the point here Mila. Would any of us go to Ukraine to visit the line of fire? Like George Orwell in Catalonia or Sontag in Bosnia? Would anyone in Europe today risk their life for Ukraine? No. So we give them the Eurovision Award instead.

BEATRICE:

Okay let's vote.

(Zoh, Mila and Beatrice fote for, Grotowski, Kovach, Via and Janus vote against.)

3 in favour, 4 against. We just killed Ukraine, let's forge ahead.

MILA:

We should have given them the award.

(Eden enters.)

EDEN:

The protest is getting worse. Some cars have been set on fire, and the area is now crawling with police and emergency response teams. They've set up perimeter control outside the theatre, and a few protesters have been detained.

GROTOWSKI:

What's the protest about?

EDEN:

I overheard them chanting something like, "For Artaud, we take a stand, freedom for theatre, we demand!" ... "For Theatre, free the institution, the world will hear the revolution!"

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MIA:

Revolution?

MILA:

OK. Who's Artaud?

GROTOWSKI:

The visionary French theatre maker from the early 20th century.

MILA:

Thank you Mr. Wikipedia. But so?

EDEN:

Theatre is our daily bread a spectacle that needs to feed the artistic senses of all people.

MILA:

Erm. What's your point?

GROTOWSKI:

It's a rewording from Artaud's seminal work "The Theatre and Its Double."

MIA

Thank you my darling. Let's get back to work. The police will handle the rest.

BEATRICE:

Next up is Poland!

(Video - Poland.)

Leśny duch, Forest Spirit, is penned by none other than Lesia Ukrainka, Ukraine's first female playwright from the 19th century. A genuine gem of her time, a prolific Ukrainian writer, poet, and feminist; she even composed her debut poem at just 9 years old, as I did!

KOVACH:

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Calm down, Beatrice, don't fall in one of your feminist trances.

MIA:

Kovach, sweetie, you're quite insufferable.

BEATRICE:

No really. I did enjoy the site-specific element, walking in the woods felt so romantic.

VIA:

This show wasn't just romantic Beatrice, it was orgasmic!

BEATRICE:

Listening to the passionate Slavic folk tale on Binaural headphones, the fragrances, the shadows. We could feel that nature was female.

It felt like entering Mother Gaia's womb, swimming in her amniotic fluid, the enveloping warmth seemed to echo the protective presence of nature's ovaries, inviting us to reconnect with our roots and embrace its inherent female wisdom.

MIA:

Okay ... It emphasized our contemporary ecological challenges and the climate crisis.

MILA:

I actually adored the male dancers too.

KOVACH:

But these dancers were not naked Mila.

MILA:

No, but the bird puppets suddenly pooping shit bombs on the audience was like so cool, on a whole other level! I was, mind blown, you know?

MIA:

That was a bit over the top. I was actually worried when One of the poop bombs hit our dear Grotowski on the head. Do you remember, darlings?

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MILA:

Come, let's do it again!

GROTOWSKI:

Immersive Eco-theatre!

MIA:

Sorry darlings for being facetious. It was an outstanding show. Eco theatre at its finest!

MILA:

Yes! Yes! Yes! Let's give them the award! This is the best show!

Guys, do you realize that by 2160, Finnish forests might be devoid of squirrels?

JANUS:

Oh no! We're doomed!

KOVACH:

You must be joking!

MILA:

No, I read about it.

KOVACH:

Where? On Instagram?

MILA:

Yes! Was it on your feed as well?

ZOH:

I concur, it's imperative to discuss this matter. We attempted to channel this message through the EU Parliament, though its efficacy largely hinges on people's personal carbon footprints.

JANUS:

Zoh, now you're sounding like a EU document! Demagogical!

KOVACH:

My teenage daughters would have loved this show. My son, not so much.

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GROTOWSKI :

My daughter would have absolutely adored it! She's a staunch eco-activist, after all.

JANUS :

Does she glue herself to gallery masterpieces in protest?

GROTOWSKI :

Actually yes. She once glued herself to Sandro Botticelli's Primavera in Florence.

JANUS :

History's dumbest protests!

GROTOWSKI :

Agreed!

KOVACH :

Is she still glued to Sandro?

VIA :

That's not so dumb, I should try gluing myself to something too!

KOVACH :

Via, glue yourself to me, I'm a masterpiece.

VIA :

You wish. My son would have loved those neo-classical Dance scenes in this show. He loves the arts. He's a gentle soul - too gentle for my taste.

JANUS :

What do you mean?

VIA :

I hope he's not gay!

JANUS :

Via, artists shouldn't make such remarks! It's inappropriate coming from an intelligent woman. I'm gay!

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VIA:

Oh come on! I was joking. Jokes are okay for you guys,
But not for women?

JANUS:

Whatever.

VIA:

My daughter on the other hand wouldn't have liked this show.
She's 18 and into biology, she's the smart one!

MIA:

My son Alexander dozes off at the theatre. Probably a defense
mechanism from watching too much. But he is 16 so that's to be
expected.

JANUS:

This show was boring!

VIA:

Come on, Janus. Not everything has to be fast-paced and
action-packed.

KOVACH:

I was impressed by the make-up. In fact it reminded me of my
daughters' playtime. But we can't award a show for kids.

VIA:

How many daughters do you have?

KOVACH:

Three, 14, 13, and 12-year-olds.

VIA, BEATRICE, MIA:

Wow.

KOVACH:

My son of a bitch is 11.

BEATRICE:

Your wife's brave.

VIA:

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Grotowski, you only have one daughter?

GOTOWSKI :

And a son. 32, not glued to a painting yet.

VIA :

Grandchildren?

GOTOWSKI :

Not yet, hope they come.

BEATRICE :

Janus, kids?

JANUS :

No kids

BEATRICE :

Husband?

JANUS :

No husband. And you Zoh?

ZOH :

No kids, no husband, no wife! Not on this planet.

JANUS :

Beatrice?

BEATRICE :

I have a daughter, 9 years old.

GROTOWSKI :

What is her name?

BEATRICE :

Zoe.

MILA :

Interesting, this is our first personal conversation in three weeks. No kids for me either.

KOVACH :

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Why have kids in a world without squirrels Mila, it makes no sense, right?

MILA:

Exactly!

KOVACH:

I need a smoke.

ZOH:

But the Polish artists do make a point. Did you know that a Polish coal plant is the biggest polluter in the EU? Followed by 6 German plants.

JANUS:

Remember, the European Union didn't start with a bunch of liberals in a rose garden posting woke slogans and futile clicktivism. It was built on coal. It was First known as ...

GROTOWSKI:

The International Authority for the Ruhr.

VIA:

Do you know why "Ruhr"?

MILA:

No clue.

VIA:

Coal, my dear.

JANUS:

In fact - the EU's second name was the ...

GROTOWSKI:

European Coal and Steel Community.

JANUS:

Notice how it was never the "European Clean Air Community"? You can't have your cake and eat it too. Economic growth and a eco-friendliness don't really go hand in hand. My father didn't build his fortune by frolicking in forests, but by leading a top European steel business. Should we be shipping

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daisy seeds to Ukraine, or should we go with tanks and boots-on-the-ground support? I mean, those assault rifles, artillery shells, missiles, bombs, and drones aren't really crafted from recycled paper, right? There can be no such thing as an eco-war. And if you're wondering if warfare's a Great enterprise: Yes, it is. And this Polish production doesn't understand any of this. It misses the point entirely.

KOVACH:

Global warming does not exist. I'm not buying it. We are just coming out of an ice age, like many times in the planet's history. Come on, do you really think economists and Bankers would be stupid enough to let everything go down the drain? And those politicians flying in jets would not do that if it was bad news, because they have all the data. They know it's nothing serious. It's as simple as that.

VIA:

Oh come on Men. Of course, ecological problems are absolutely Undeniable! But the real problem is another. The elites want to make us feel guilty, they divert our attention, while they dominate the world! But they are guilty. I mean, seriously, it's all part of their Zionist grand plan to put a leash on the freedom of the Western World. Just like they did with Covid vaccines!

MIA:

Nonsense, dear Via! We need to stay level-headed here.

MILA:

You know, I once met this guy who had this theory about reptilians taking over. He told me that a bunch of world leaders were swapped out for lizards. But I think he might've been *using* at the time.

BEATRICE:

Using what?

MILA:

You know. Dextromethorphan, Rohypnol, and rum.

BEATRICE:

God save us.

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EDEN:

Only radical action can save us!

ZOH:

What kind of action are we talking about here?

EDEN:

Theatre, Theatre can be our salvation from the environmental mess and sheer foolishness that's ruling the world.

MIA:

Alright, let's not get too philosophical here, honey. Remember, we're just a jury at a theatre festival. Beatrice.

BEATRICE:

Yes. Let's get serious. So Poland remains a contender?

MILA:

Just give them the award!

JANUS:

No, no, no!

BEATRICE:

I kind of wish they went with Lesia Ukrainka's "The Blue Rose" instead. It explores madness as a form of freedom, and that's a fascinating angle.

KOVACH:

Hah, madness is kind of my thing. Beatrice, How about being my madness? My freedom!

BEATRICE:

Kovach, stop! That is bordering on harassment! Are you harassing me? Did you all witness that? I don't want tolerate this behaviour anymore, do you understand? Do you?

(Silence.)

Lesia Ukrainka is a top-notch playwright, there aren't many female writers in this festival. Plus, she's Ukrainian, as her name suggests. We've already let go of the Ukrainian show, and we can't keep shutting out the Ukrainians. Janus, I get where you're coming from but the majority of the jury members

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actually liked this show. So far, we've killed the UK and Ukraine. Poland is still in the game.

JANUS:

No, we should vote!

BEATRICE:

OK, let's vote.

(Zoh, Via, Beatrice, Grotowski, Mila vote for, Kovach, Janus vote against.)

5 in favour, 2 against. Next stop: Sweden.

JANUS:

You're exactly like my mother Beatrice. "Janus, I get where you're coming from, but there are more Important matters to consider." So, folks, Let's move on to killing Sweden and their Finnish saunas!

(The electricity shuts off. Everybody reacts. Then they turn on the phone lights.)

MIA:

Calm down, everyone. Love, go check, what happened.

(Eden leaves.)

BEATRICE:

Mia what do we do, do we continue?

MIA:

We just continue with the awards, please everyone just sit down! It's dark, so be careful. Sit here! I'm sure they will fix it soon. So Sweden is next, right?

KOVACH:

Let's be clear the show about migrants cannot win the first European Theatre Festival. It's as simple as that.

MIA:

Kovach, dumpling, let's keep it respectful. You can't say that!

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ZOH:

Well, he did just say it.

MIA:

Darlings. We've got to make sure every show gets a fair shot.

KOVACH:

No, because this Swedish move was clearly calculated. We can all see through this trick. We've seen it all before. Sweden's a master at the Eurovision Song Contest, remember? From Abba to Loreen. They know how to win in Europe. And now sending immigrant actors they think they are going to score a politically correct victory, such a dirty game. Such a transparent game, but you know what? It's not going to work, not with me, we are kicking it out.

JANUS:

I haven't heard something this absurd from a jury so far. And trust me, there have been plenty of absurd moments.

MILA:

But it was like, seriously legit! Come on the actors were migrants from all over the world, India, Syria, Africa - and even Afghanistan and Somalia! It's really cute Kovach.

VIA:

No Mila. I agree with Kovach. You cannot possibly believe how much that ethno-fusion soundtrack was torturing my ears. It's like they blended African, Arabic, and Indian sounds all together. A musical nightmare!

(The electricity returns. Video - SWEDEN.)

MIA:

Listen, sunshines! I just want to remind everyone that everybody here actually voted to put it on the shortlist.

VIA:

Yes, I voted because I didn't want you to think that I'm a racist. But the show sucks!

BEATRICE:

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Via, that's appalling. Iago's performance was exceptional, possibly the best in the entire festival.

MIA:

Absolutely darling. He was brilliant.

GROTOWSKI:

The Swedish Iago was outstanding indeed.

(Eden returns.)

EDEN:

It is not clear what happened. We are running on a backup power generator now.

MIA:

Thanks, Honey.

KOVACH:

I think this was clearly a pro-Palestian show.

JANUS:

You can't make this shit up!

GROTOWSKI:

Are you intoxicated Kovach?

KOVACH:

Palestine has an embassy in Sweden!

VIA:

No! Really?

BEATRICE:

Now that I think about it. It is strange that Sweden didn't send their renowned Royal Dramatic Theatre, the Dramaaten, which would be more fitting for the first European Theatre Festival. Instead, they sent this Gästteatren, their immigrant theatre. Why? I mean how come, Kovach?

JANUS: *(Ironically)*

Kovach, do you know where Beatrice is from?

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BEATRICE:

What are you implying Janus?! I am an Israeli Jew, but I'm pro-Palestinian! Let's get back to work!

KOVACH:

I have strong suspicions Sweden has an Islamic agenda here! You should check the funding trails?

MIA:

Dumpling, please stop it. I really think we should all hear what Zoh has to say on this subject. Would you please?

ZOH:

They've emphasised class differences in today's Europe in an alternative way. Why does Iago, an upper middle class citizen, make the migrant Othello, kill Desdemona?

GROTOWSKI:

The rich being envious of the poor. Great!

MILA:

Word! I don't get rich people or their fascination with expensive items. The other Day, during our break, I saw a man's shirt. OK, this was a fancy shop, but still - I was shocked. A €2500 price tag. I was like: Fuck! I mean, who buys such a shirt?

JANUS:

I do.

MILA:

What?

JANUS:

Yes, well my mother buys them for me. I've had to have it all in life - they sent me to Swiss Boarding School, Oxford University, an Executive MBA from HEC Paris, summers on yachts, skiing in Aspen. They gave me Everything. I was the anointed one. I guess I'm the Iago of that show.

MILA:

Does that shirt you're wearing cost 2,500 euros? Can I try it?

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ZOH:

Janus, how on earth did you land in theatre? I mean, rich people usually steer clear of the stage, right?

JANUS:

My aunt got me hooked on theatre as a kid. She dragged me to shows all the time. When I grew up, I secretly applied for a producer job at this small, fringe theatre. Expectedly, my old man went ballistic. I still remember him vividly ... spewing fire: "This family churns out weaponry, we are arms producers, not fags!"

EDEN:

I am Desdemona ... She was so fragile. When Othello's hands gripped her neck, I felt like I was her.

MILA:

Are you transgender or gender-fluid or non-binary?

EDEN:

No, I'm not. The actress who played Desdemona was breathtaking. Her vulnerability was palpable, and I just connected with her.

KOVACH:

Holy shit!

MIA:

As much as I'd like to encourage open sharing, let's stay on track with our jury deliberations. Honey, please don't interfere.

KOVACH:

So, if Janus is our Iago, and that guy there is our Desdemona this makes you our Othello, Zoh! And we've got a better cast Than the Swedish show.

MILA:

Zoh, with your presence, you'd rock as Othello. And, if I play Desdemona, get ready for some nudity.

KOVACH:

Yes and we have: The Best European Show!

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(Zoh looks at Kovach and doesn't say anything. The action in the jury room stops for a moment and Zoh reflects alone.)

ZOH:

Ask anyone about Othello and what do they recall? They will recall his ebony hue. He is Black. They won't remember a hero in love, a jealous husband, or the slayer of his love. It is "Black" that defines him.

The alpha and omega of everyone's perception is our skin colour. I, a member of the European parliament, frequently overhear fellow members as they dub me "Othello,"

Little does it matter that my roots delve deep into Europe's soil, ever since Yunga, my father's forebear, a child of nine, was sold a slave, and brought to London in 1742. He was transferred, gifted, and shuffled in the hands of power. From London he crossed the seas to Amsterdam, packaged as a gift to a Dutch doctor, who in turn sold him to Hamburg's nobility, who then offered him to Denmark's monarch. Yunga's son was then gifted back to London. From Copenhagen to London, the journey circled... and the odyssey persisted... as my mother's lineage adds to my European story, they too were sold and resold in Spain, Portugal and finally, France.

A European background is etched in my essence. I am embedded in Europe's past. My ancestry has been stained by Europe's history, shadows and chains. How can I not be called a European? They shall not diminish me, I will not let them confine me to a stereotype, reduce me to a symbol of strangeness, solely based on the colour of my skin.

(The action in the jury room continues. Eden enters.)

EDEN:

The protest is directed against you! Actually against the entire festival! The protesters are shouting slogans like: "Give us the jury, we'll be the judges"

MIA:

That's nonsensical! Are you serious? Are they really protesting against a theatre jury? Against the festival?

VIA:

Who would burn cars to protest a stupid theatre jury?!

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GROTOWSKI :

Sounds like something from Ionesco or Danil Kharms.

MIA:

Guys, never mind, protests in Brussels are nothing special at all – there's always a reason to protest. We need to hurry up. Time is of the essence.

BEATRICE:

Yes. Let's keep the discussion going. I assume we killed Sweden.

ZOH:

We did not!

MIA:

Beatrice, call for the vote please.

BEATRICE:

Understood. Colleagues can we please vote:

KOVACH:

All the pro-Islamics raise your finger.

BEATRICE:

Kovach please. Please raise your hands.

(Mila, Zoh, and Grotowski vote for, Kovach, Beatrice and Via vote against. Janus can't decide.)

BEATRICE:

Three in favour, three against. Janus?

(Janus votes against.)

Good. So now we killed Sweden.

KOVACH:

Goodbye, ABBA!

BEATRICE:

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Let's move to the German-French co-production of Klaus Mann's Mephisto.

KOVACH:

But we eliminated the French-German co-production yesterday.

BEATRICE:

"Mephisto"? No. Definitely not.

VIA:

Yes we kicked out that show. We said we need to make a statement. We need to prove money can't buy passion. They need a stronger reason than the project's 3.5 million euro budget to win.

JANUS:

And it even wasn't a real co-production. Co-productions are meant to revolve around collaboration, this was anything but! What they did was hire Christian Lupa who put together a production in Germany, and then they simply copy-pasted it in France with a French cast. They made two identical productions selling it as one. That's vanity!

BEATRICE:

However, it was exceptionally well-executed ...

JANUS:

Richard thinks so too, Beatrice?

BEATRICE:

You're gross!

GROTOWSKI:

Undoubtedly the finest production. Hands-down. They certainly had a lot of money and all the support in the world. However, the fact that Germany and France collaborated to create this anti-nazi performance during a time when right-wing extremism is on the rise all over Europe is truly significant. A topical show about how an artist sells his soul to fascists for the sake of stardom.

KOVACH:

What are you talking about, Grotowski? At the Festival, we had

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to watch the first act in French and the second act in German.
Can you believe it?

MIA:

But dumplings. This co-production is really important for Richard.

GROTOWSKI:

It's important for Europe as well.

MIA:

It was the real-life story of the actor Gustaf Gründgens.

BEATRICE:

How can an artist become an instrument of political power, or worse - a tool of tyranny?

JANUS:

I don't know. Maybe you can ask Richard that question.

BEATRICE:

This is a mobbing, Mia!

MIA:

Janus, history is brimming with artists who willingly allowed themselves to be wielded by governments. My grandfather was an opera singer in Nazi-occupied Brussels. He not only sang for the Nazis, but also spied for them.

JANUS:

Mia, welcome to the descendants of Nazi-collaborators Club. My grandfather was selling arms to The Nazis during the occupation.

ZOH:

At the same time, history showcases many artists who resisted, from Ernest Hemingway, George Orwell and Anna Akhmatova ...

GROTOWSKI:

Marlene Dietrich, Bertold Brecht, the Manns.

BEATRICE:

My mother's entire family was gassed in Auschwitz. She was the

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only survivor. After the 2nd World War, the world said never again. Still, it is happening all over again.

KOVACH:

I'm sorry for this history, but you know what? You are blowing things out of proportion. Beatrice, it's not 1923 or 1939; there are no bombings, no air raids outside and no Hitler-like figures in governments. The right-wing is simply winning because the right is right, not because of fascists! This show is just trying to scare people!

ZOH:

No Kovach. Face the facts. There are fascist or neo-Nazi parties in parliaments all over Europe. Read the news. Fascist terminology and ideologies are persistently on the upswing.

JANUS:

We get the point but the show sucked!

VIA:

I wasn't impressed either.

ZOH:

You know what will be impressive Via? That the next great dictator will be a drugged billionaire not some world government.

MILA:

I was lowkey fascinated by it - like, half French, half German? It was spicy: erotic. The seductive *Français*, like bubbling champagne, coupled with the commanding strength of the *Deutsch*, like a force against the wall. *Drück mich, drück mich fest!*

KOVACH:

Naked against the wall?

BEATRICE:

That is not even bordering on harassment! This is harassment!

MIA:

Dumpling, behave!

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BEATRICE:

OK, let's vote!

KOVACH:

This show, the French-German show we eliminated them yesterday! I need a break.

BEATRICE:

We did not!

JANUS:

Okay. Fine! Let's vote then.

KOVACH:

Let's vote, vote, vote! Hitler was democratically elected too. Democracy is not a magic wand.

GROTOWSKI:

Democracy is a profound European contribution to humankind. It is a European ritual, in the anthropological sense of the word. This ritual spread from Europe throughout the world. Yes, it is imperfect, yes, it fails sometimes, but still we do live in a world shaped by the virtues of Democracy!

BEATRICE:

On that note, let's vote. Please raise your hand for the French-German co-production?

(Grotowski, Zoh, and Beatrice vote for, Via, Kovach, and Janus vote against.)

Mila, you liked the blonde actor?

MILA:

Well ... I'm unsure.

KOVACH:

Mia! It's getting late and we are adding not eliminating shows. I don't get it.

MIA:

I'm sorry but you just can't exclude France and Germany. Together, they represent a third of Europe's population.

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ZOH:

They make 41% of the EU's economy...

KOVACH:

Is this a Demographic competition or a Theatre Festival?

(Mila votes against. Mia hides her vote.)

MIA:

Let's keep France and Germany in for the moment, Mila? We'll revisit this conversation later.

KOVACH:

Later, later, later! I am hungry.

MIA:

We have a dinner reservation after we wrap it up here, at one.

VIA:

I'll starve till one!

GROTOWSKI:

My blood sugar is dropping down.

ZOH:

I wouldn't mind a bite.

VIA:

I can't eat that late, you know that! Even now it's late. And I can't think if I'm hungry.

MIA:

But Richard wanted to invite you to his favorite restaurant Le Chalet de La Triumph... It's a two Michelin star. I'm really sure you'll all enjoy it.

GROTOWSKI:

I've found my banana. Saved!

ZOH:

Mia, we must eat.

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MIA:

Ok, is anything at all open at this hour?

EDEN:

There's this Afghan Kebab place around the corner.

BEATRICE:

No, no, no! I will not eat food made by the people who put burkas on their women.

KOVACH:

A beef kebab for me, and beer.

EDEN:

They don't serve alcohol.

VIA:

One vegan falafel for me!

BEATRICE:

Falafel is vegan. Why say vegan? Via, are you going to eat their food?

VIA:

The sauces are not always vegan, so I felt the need to specify.

BEATRICE:

It is not about veganism ... Ok, never mind!

JANUS:

I don't eat at this hour.

MIA:

OK, so you don't have a problem. You are not hungry!

JANUS:

I'm hungry! But I am dieting!

MILA:

A Fish burger for me, please.

EDEN:

They don't serve fish.

MILA:

Shrimps?

EDEN:

No seafood either.

ZOH:

Marques for me.

MILA:

What is it, Zoh?

ZOH:

Sausages.

MILA:

I don't eat pork.

EDEN:

It's a halal place. They don't have pork anyway.

MILA:

OK, I'll have what Zoh is having.

GROTOWSKI:

May I offer you a lovely bottle of Sancerre?

EDEN:

We can't find alcohol from anywhere close at this hour.

GROTOWSKI:

Yes, but I am asking for white wine not alcohol.

MIA:

No, no, no, Grotowski, please stop it. Absolutely no alcohol. I'll have two kebabs, lamb and chicken, gluten-free pita bread, falafel, baklava and double ayran, fries and a mixed salad, small.

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EDEN:

Should I text Richard to cancel the reservation at Le Chalet de la Triumph?

MIA:

Absolutely not!

(Eden goes out)

KOVACH:

Never in a million years, would I have imagined that the first European Theatre Festival would be reduced to a Taliban establishment.

MIA:

My darling blossoms would you join us at the table?

Eden returns.

EDEN:

I couldn't get out due to the riots. They keep requesting you to come outside.

MILA:

Who cares! What'll happen with our order?

EDEN.

I've already called the Kebab place, they promised to deliver.

KOVACH:

Let's make a movie. *Kabul, mon amour!*

MIA:

Dumpling stop, please behave!

KOVACH:

You are so serious, people!

MIA:

Please, let's go back to our business!

BEATRICE:

Next up, Italy: "Soldi, soldi".

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(Video - Italy.)

JANUS:

Finally, we have a great piece of theatre addressing crucial topics with courage and real energy. The outstanding show of the entire festival.

VIA:

Funny, I thought "The Little Mermaid 6" was your favourite.

JANUS:

You guys killed the Little Mermaid! That only leaves this great Italian show, on our shortlist.

GROTOWSKI:

It was a Tour de force! Political Theatre. Brilliant, brilliant, brilliant! This show was absolutely fascinating!

MILA:

Let's give them the award.

KOVACH:

For me it was a complete and utter Marxist bullshit.

JANUS:

Actually, it's not Marxist at all. What's Marxist about making a show about the control of food and drug production, which in turn controls the world? The play vividly illustrates how only four corporations dominate global grain trade.

MILA:

My friend told me that in the near future we'll have to only eat lab grown chicken. Via, perhaps, you will be able to eat those too!

(A drop from the ceiling hits Grotowski in his head.)

KOVACH:

It is leaking! Oh, oh, oh!! Grotowski hit me! Hit me hard - I need a reality check!

(Grotowski hits Kovach hard.)

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MIA: *(to Eden)*

Please honey, can you take my phone, so it doesn't get wet. Everyone, just ignore the minor leaks, please. Better grab your chairs and let us move on. And let's sit down here, come on.

VIA:

Rainharvesting is our future!

(Eden brings the buckets and places them under the leaks.)

GROTOWSKI:

It was captivating how the young Italian playwright delved into the European. Mafias, their conflicts, alliances, and shared interests. The show is declaring that drug money is flooding in Europe.

MILA:

Seven of my friends died of overdose.

ZOH:

My brother is serving a three year prison sentence for drug-dealing.

MIA:

Let's get back to discussing our show.

KOVACH:

I can't focus anymore! I'm hungry! And these leaks, it's unbearable.

MIA:

Why are you focusing on these insignificant leaks?! Look in the direction where it's not leaking!

ZOH:

The actor who played the lawyer of the Mafia Boss ...

BEATRICE:

The handsome Latino lover...

MILA:

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That guy who looks like Alberto Di Maggio, the Eurovision winner! Oh, amore mio!

ZOH:

Yes, he is involved in one of the Italian #metoo cases. The matter has been under court review for two years now due to allegations of sexual misconduct.

BEATRICE, MILA, MIA:

No! Oh my God, no!

VIA:

Wait, we can't kill Italy just because somebody might have done something inappropriate a few years ago.

BEATRICE:

Via! We must uphold the highest moral standards. We cannot condone sexual harassment.

GROTOWSKI:

Could you give us more details about what happened?

ZOH:

If I remember correctly an actress accused him of groping her on stage during a rehearsal. She said, "He put his hands on my breasts, and I told him not to do that," And he said: "What am I doing?" The actor denies any wrongdoing, claiming it never happened and that she was upset because he rejected her advances. It's supposed to be her revenge.

VIA:

So, nothing has been proven yet.

BEATRICE:

Where there's smoke, there's a fire.

MIA:

The first edition of the first European Theatre Festival cannot have as a winner a #metoo-involved cast member. Why would they submit a show like that. What were they thinking?

VIA:

Are you all crazy? If the Italians had an issue, they could have replaced him. Clearly, it's not a big concern for them.

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BEATRICE:

Well, the Italian standards for sexual harassment are questionable at best.

JANUS:

This discussion is getting too extreme. The show isn't about sexual harassment; it's about the corporate world's influence on our lives.

GROTOWSKI:

We should disqualify the Italian show. We can't compromise a victim's experience.

VIA:

But who is the victim here? ... I've been through one of these trials for years. An actress who worked with my husband accused him of sexually assaulting her. The case went to court, and he was eventually acquitted. The pain we endured was immense. Our children asked questions, and I had to explain the situation repeatedly to friends and family. He lost his job as artistic director and was fired from his teaching position at the Drama Academy.

MIA:

Well, he was acquitted in the end.

VIA:

After three years! He couldn't work in any theatre during that time. He still doesn't receive offers for work. And why? Just because they had a one-night stand, and she wanted to continue an affair with him. But he didn't want to leave me for her. Are we now going to let the Italian show and the efforts of dozens of people become victims of unproven accusations?

BEATRICE:

What if this Alberto Di Maggio look-alike did harass that woman? What then? I, for one, am sure he did!

VIA:

In that case, he's an idiot, but we shouldn't punish an entire country based on rumours. The court will handle it, and he

will face consequences. Seriously, who are we to judge? What right do we have to disqualify someone based on rumours?

BEATRICE:

It is a court case, not mere rumours! We cannot award the show with an actor accused of sexual harassment. How will his victim feel?! Enough with male chauvinism already! Unwanted kisses, hands on our breasts and butts, thrusting tongues in our mouths and coercing intercourse, if you don't give your boss a blow job, you lose your job! Enough with the blackmailing! No, no, no, no, no, no, no! Not any more!

ZOH:

Beatrice I sympathize, but Via is right. We have to respect the rule of law. We can't act above that!

VIA:

Come to think of it - Why don't we disqualify the Polish show for using the image Of the Guernica in the set? Picasso was allegedly abusive toward women!

ZOH:

Should we also disqualify all of art history because many paintings of Jesus depict him as white when he definitely wasn't?

MIA:

Jesus aside! This show can't win. Simple as that.

GROTOWSKI:

I agree with Mia. It was a good show, though not as impressive as some others.

JANUS:

What's wrong with you Grotowski?! Once more you are changing your mind due to Mia's pressure, just as with the Brexit show vote! Shifting opinions simply to please the bosses?!

Grotowski, is this the power of your democracy, the ritual of rights, the sacred European contribution to the mankind?

GROTOWSKI:

Only those lacking wisdom don't change the opinions even after they comprehend their mistakes.

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JANUS:

Give me a break!

KOVACH:

This show has a secret marksist agenda.

JANUS:

So husbands can keep their late-night activities in Brussels secret from their wives.

KOVACH:

What?!

(Kovach and Janus start to fight. Mia's phone is flashing. Eden takes it and goes to the corner and answers quietly.)

EDEN:

It is urgent.

MIA:

Good evening, your Highness ... No, Your Highness, you are not Disturbing me at all ... Yes, Your Highness, we are still deliberating ... Thank you, it is a wonderful jury indeed. No, Your Highness, not any decision yet ... Absolutely, your country sent a marvelous production ... Not only marvelous, but extraordinary... Oh, yes, Richard was so very happy that his Majesty was present at your country's show ... Sorry the signal is bad ... I will give your regards to the jury ... No, not at all ... Pleasure talking to you. Sure, call any time... Naturally ...

MILA:

Who called you, Mia? Prince Harry?! He is so handsome! Is he coming here tonight? ... He is coming tonight!

MIA:

I'm not at liberty to tell you... I've received over 20 phone calls so far, and a dozen emails from Cultural Ministers, in some cases even Prime Ministers, and EU officials, and in four cases Presidents or members of Royal families. They're all inquiring about the chances of their country's show. We have a

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responsibility here. The European Theatre Festival is far more significant than it appears.

(The leaks continue.)

KOVACH:

How can we be responsible with these leaks?

MIA:

Forget the fucking water, hurry up everyone. And let's get back to work to finish this festival!

JANUS:

Let's vote.

BEATRICE:

Mia, we can't ...

MIA:

Beatrice, we must adhere to the rules. Yes, please proceed with the vote.

BEATRICE:

OK, I'll put sexual harassment to a referendum! Please note that in the case of a Yes vote, I will quit the jury. Who's in favour of keeping The Italian show "Money, Money" in the competition?

(Janus, Via, and Zoh vote for, Mila, Beatrice and Grotowski vote against, Kovach is hesitating.)

JANUS:

Mila?

MILA:

What? I really hate it when older actors lean on me on stage or touch my hair as if I'm some kind of sex doll. No!

BEATRICE:

Kovach, you didn't like the show?!

KOVACH:

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No, I'm against Marxism.

(Kovach votes against.)

BEATRICE:

Okay, that's 3 in favour, 4 against. So we just killed Italy! Arrivederci!

VIA:

Beatrice, you are absurd!

JANUS:

Beatrice, we just killed Italy. We killed an outstanding show, addressing vital European themes. We killed this show because of an allegation against an actor in a minor role in a cast of over 40 actors.

(The action pauses for a moment as Beatrice reflects alone.)

BEATRICE:

At my mother's grave, I swore that I would put an end to the unspeakable horrors that men have inflicted on women. I pledged to avenge all the bruises that my mother suffered from my father's fists and all my grandmother's broken teeth from my grandfather's boots. I want the strength of Volumnia, who made Coriolanus an invincible warrior. I'll raise my daughter the way she raised her son - with the determination of a warrior:

"The breasts of Hecuba, when she did suckle Hector, looked not lovelier than Hector's forehead when it spit forth blood at Grecian sword, contemning."

(Beatrice returns to the jury room. Janus is alone, lost in thought.)

JANUS:

I was supposed to be the new Coriolanus. Like him trained by the deadly ambition of Volumnia. If not for Theatre - Shakespeare, Aeschylus, Chekhov, Witkiewicz; if not for literature - De Sade, Zola, Mann, Kharmis, Krleža; If not for film - De Sica, Visconti, Pasolini, Antonioni, Coppola, Herzog, Fassbinder - I'd have become my mother's sociopath and

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the heir of my father's arms empire. But, I managed to resist! Today the rich look down with disdain at ordinary people, but I don't. No, I won't shy away from exposing the narcissism, ambition, and greed tearing Europe apart. The European dream of freedom became a comedy of errors. Just as Caesar's lust for power morphed into tyranny, marking the end of the 500-year old Roman Republic and heralding the rise of The Roman Empire, today's wanna-be-Caesars drag Europe into a darkness that could come to be a new Kristallnacht.

(Janus returns to the jury room as the action resumes.)

MIA:

So I think we need a short break.
Zoh, if I could have a moment of your time,
that would be greatly appreciated.

(BREAK.)

MIA:

So I think we need a short break.
Zoh, if I could have a moment of your time,
that would be greatly appreciated.

(The jury is waiting. Eden plays music on his phone. They start dancing. Slow at first. Gradually they get wild. Mia enters and she is shocked. She turns off the music.)

MIA:

Well, I am speechless. May I remind you that Europe is not some never-ending party, it's rather a profound undertaking and a colossal responsibility. One doesn't come to Brussels to have fun

JANUS:

Oh, that's fresh! Since when?

MIA:

Beatrice, please. Let's continue with the proceedings immediately!

(Zoh enters.)

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ZOH:

Breaking news!

MIA:

What?

ZOH:

Politico just published an article: Richard is under investigation for corruption involving Qatar.

MIA:

Let me see! ... Fuck!

(Mia leaves the room.)

MILA:

What just happened?

GROTOWSKI:

Politics.

MILA:

Oh, all right. I thought it was something serious.

KOVACH

Damn Politico.

ZOH:

Media, the fourth pillar of democracy, merely doing their job.

KOVACH:

Doing their job my ass! It's fake news!

JANUS:

Alright, things are getting a bit chaotic here. Madam President, can we proceed?

BEATRICE:

Next up: "Daphne". A documentary-theatre piece portraying journalist Daphne Caruana Galizia ...

(Video - Malta.)

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GROTOWSKI :

Remarkable! Honestly, I'm not a fan of documentary theatre, but this was unquestionably the finest such show I've ever witnessed! Exceptional!

MILA :

I usually skip topics like politics, media, freedom of speech, and so on. But this show slayed it!

VIA :

Slayed?

MILA :

Yes, Via, like it was extraordinarily good.

JANUS :

It was wow! It brought to light the drama ...

(Mia returns, having a phone conversation in the only part where there is reception. She goes to stand in the corner.)

MIA :

Hallo? Please just repeat. This is absolutely impossible; it's fake news. I've known him for ten years; he's a model of decency ... I'm sorry the signal is breaking up. I have to go. Thank you. Feel free to call me whenever. What?! This is the only place where this fucking phone works!

ZOH :

What's the matter?

MIA :

Everything is okay. Please, continue.

JANUS :

As I was saying, "Daphne" expressed the present-day drama Of journalism and the audacity of corrupt politicians and business magnates and their connections with the mafia. They don't hesitate to eliminate journalists in broad daylight.

BEATRICE : *(on the verge of tears)*

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Oh, my God, that scene of her being blown up by a bomb while starting her modest car, and is later discovered - in pieces - by her son. I am sorry, I am emotional again, it was profoundly unsettling.

GROTOWSKI :

I genuinely wonder how such a courageous production made its way to this festival without political interference.

KOVACH :

You're all magnifying this reportage! It's merely an attempt to glorify the journalist, despite her highly problematic writing. She waged a personal vendetta against people, particularly women ...

VIA :

She was nasty towards women indeed. Using terms for them like cow, bitch, village bicycle!

KOVACH :

And let's not forget: she was a mouthpiece for Malta's Nationalist party - far from an independent journalist!

JANUS :

Since when are you against Nationalist parties, Kovach? If I remember correctly, yours is nationalist, extreme right wing. Right?

KOVACH :

I'm merely objective!

JANUS :

Of course ...

MIA :

I feel compelled to interject ... True. Daphne Caruana Galizia definitely wasn't a saint. Her darker side was also touched upon in the show. She seamlessly oscillated between informed political views and sensationalism.

Brilliant investigative journalism and tabloid trash. Yes. She even hurt innocent bystanders while targeting her political foes. Yet, she managed to push the boundaries of Free Speech in a young democracy still finding its footing.

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KOVACH:

Now, let's just be honest - this can't be the best show at the inaugural European Theatre Festival.

BEATRICE:

Why not?

KOVACH:

A minuscule island nation from the far South of Europe emerging as the winner? Seriously?

GROTOWSKI:

Kovach, we must adopt a more serious stance. The murder of a European journalist, along with the ensuing political, legal, media, societal, and ethical implications, is an issue we cannot simply dismiss.

ZOH:

Few month after Daphne Ján Kuciak and His fiancée were Murdered for investigating Government Corruption. Kuciak had also delved Into the Panama Papers, like Daphne.

JANUS:

And who knows how many other journalists were killed in Ukraine, Syria, Palestine ...

KOVACH:

It's hot like Syria in here!

JANUS:

And the counts of imprisoned journalists?

GROTOWSKI:

Starting with Wikileaks' Assange.

JANUS:

Continuing with journalists held captive in Russia, Turkey ...

VIA:

What about artists facing incarceration in those nations?

GROTOWSKI:

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Roberto Saviano living undercover in Europe ...

KOVACH:

My apologies! I mistakenly walked in here. I was searching for a theatre jury, but it appears I've stumbled into a human rights committee meeting.

My sincere apologies ... I'm going out to smoke and maybe I will find some theatre experts, assuming that not all converted to human rights activists.

(Kovach bumps in Richard who enters the room.)

RICHARD:

Well then! How's my jury faring? Everything proceeding smoothly? Oh, nice setting. Lots of leaks.

BEATRICE:

Yes, we were just discussing Malta.

RICHARD:

Excellent, excellent. And? Have we determined a winner yet?

BEATRICE:

Well, not quite. But we have a condensed shortlist. Currently, Poland, the Slovakian-Hungarian-Cypriot coproduction, Malta, Turkey ...

RICHARD:

What about the French-German co-production?

BEATRICE:

France and Germany remain in contention.

RICHARD:

Very well, very well.

JANUS:

But let's stop beating around the bush and confront the glaring issue at hand?

RICHARD:

Ah, so you're privy to the rumours...

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MIA:

Yes, we've learned about those ridiculous allegations

RICHARD:

What can I say ... It's a minor misunderstanding. We'll rectify it shortly. What truly matters is selecting the winner.

ZOH:

Nevertheless, it might be prudent to suspend yourself, sir. As you say, there's nothing to be concerned about.

RICHARD:

Rubbish. That scenario would simply divert attention from the festival. And we wouldn't want that, would we?

MIA:

Absolutely not.

ZOH:

Is that "scenario" more significant than the festival itself?

KOVACH:

Fake news!!

MIA:

Can we concentrate on the performances, please?

RICHARD:

Ladies and gentlemen, many are keen on witnessing my downfall. They're hurling accusations to see if anything sticks. But it won't. My team will ensure it doesn't.

GROTOWSKI:

So, no connection with Qatar then?

RICHARD:

Of course, I've had dealings with Qatar. Just as I have with Saudi Arabia, Brazil, Mongolia, and Lichtenstein. I'm the president of the European Parliament, after all. I'm acquainted with a multitude of people, and they, with me. There's no escaping that. Now, about Malta? I missed the show. What did it entail?

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GROTOWSKI :

Free press, nepotism, organized crime, Gambling, money laundering ...

RICHARD :

Sounds so ordinary!

VIA :

Some attendees left the performance early.

RICHARD :

I'm confident there was an ok production. But theatre should bring joy, illumination to life. It should transcend repackaging the nightly news. It should possess magic, upliftment!

MILA :

That's so true, Mr. President.

RICHARD :

That's precisely why I initiated this festival - to infuse positivity into people!

JANUS :

If I may interject... who exactly constitutes the jury here?

RICHARD :

Undoubtedly, you are the jury. I merely wished to convey that a festival like this... well, I'm uncertain if a deceased journalist is a fitting theme for a winner.

BEATRICE :

We did have some reservations about the show, and not all of us are in favour, are we? Let's vote?

(Grotowski, Zoh and Janus vote for, Kovach, Via, Beatrice and Mila vote against.)

GROTOWSKI :

Beatrice? Mila? What's happened?

BEATRICE :

Three in favour, four against. Malta is out.

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JANUS:

We just killed Malta, Isn't that right, Beatrice?

BEATRICE:

Yes, Janus, we just killed Malta!

JANUS:

We just killed Daphne!

RICHARD:

One down. How many more to go?

BEATRICE:

Do we even need to talk about the Hungarian-Slovakian-Cypriot co-production "Listen to the Heartbeat"?

(Video - Hungary-Slovakia-Cyprus.)

It's a pro-life, anti-abortion agenda... propaganda. But this isn't something we should be discussing today. Women should have the freedom to decide about their own bodies, period.

KOVACH:

Look, this perspective is fascist.

BEATRICE:

It's not fascist, it's a matter of human rights!

KOVACH:

But what about the rights of those who don't agree with you?

BEATRICE:

The play was written by AI! This alone should be the disqualifying factor! Writers almost burned down Hollywood for that!

KOVACH:

AI is not the point. The point is that you are trying to disqualify the show based on your beliefs. And being anti AI is just another example.

BEATRICE:

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Are you serious, Kovach?

VIA:

Actually, Kovach has a point. The performance was good. It left a big impression.

ZOH:

Well forcing us to listen to foetal heartbeats, much like they do with women seeking abortions, it's a bit extreme and bordering on poor taste.

VIA:

It was actually the mother's heartbeat. But that's beside the point. What I wanted to say is that Beatrice, you're a hypocrite. When it comes to topics you disagree with, you dismiss the show, much like you did with Italy.

BEATRICE:

How can you, as a woman, defend a rapist and an Anti-abortion law simultaneously?

VIA:

I'm defending the rule of law, the presumption of innocence and the freedom of speech. And you're defending your personal opinions.

MIA:

Let's all just calm down.

BEATRICE:

We're talking about the winner of The European Theatre Festival here. We're talking about European values! Abortion?!

KOVACH:

Look - this show is supported by Creative Europe! So, it's also about European values!

MIA:

Creative Europe supports many others shows, it doesn't mean anything.

KOVACH:

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Europe is more than just your left-wing agenda. More than half of European citizens disagree with your views, Beatrice!

MILA:

We already had this debate several days ago ... But it's an issue that should not even be discussed at all! What is this? It's my body! And nobody who has never bled from their cunt should lecture me about my body!

BEATRICE:

Abortion is a human right!

KOVACH:

We have to be professional, not emotional. Let's vote!

VIA:

I don't want my personal opinion about abortion to be recorded in the festival documents

GROTOWSKI:

Let's have a secret vote!

BEATRICE:

Is this even possible Mia?

MIA:

Technically it is. But I really don't see the point ...

KOVACH:

Let's make a secret vote and save our Europe, our only home!

MIA:

Honey, please get some ballot papers please.

GROTOWSKI:

I have something!

BEATRICE:

Okay, let's vote.

(Everyone votes in silence. The votes are counted.)

BEATRICE:

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Yes, No, No, Yes, No ... Invalid ... No. Two yes votes, four no votes and one invalid vote.

JANUS:

Beatrice, we just killed Hungary, Slovakia and Cyprus.

KOVACH:

How is the vote invalid?!

BEATRICE:

Look. It was first "Yes", then it got crossed, then a "No" which got crossed too. Then I can't even read what follows. It's... invalid. But that's beside the point, we got four "Nos".

KOVACH:

No, that's not right. We need to vote again! Without the leftist propaganda

EDEN:

Sorry to interrupt. The leader of the protest wants to address you.

MIA:

Who? Address whom?

EDEN:

The jury. The leader of the protest. He represents RAW.

MIA:

What does RAW stand for?

EDEN:

RAW - Radical Audience Warriors.

KOVACH:

Oh my god, save my soul!

MIA:

No, no, no! Absolutely not.

RICHARD:

We need to hear him out, Mia! That's democracy.

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(To Eden.)

Can you connect us, please?

EDEN:

Certainly.

(Eden initiates a video call. Philip appears on the screen, with a crowd shouting in the background.)

EDEN:

We can see and hear you.

PHILIP:

We are RAW - Radical Audience Warriors. We can't allow this jury to grant the Best European Show Award! The reason is simple: None of the shows deserve the award! European Theatre today is in a pathetic state. Once a sacred, transformative art, is now a miserable servant of governments and funds, sponsors and agendas. And who comprises this jury? What qualifications do they possess? Who chose them? Who do they truly represent? And why are politicians part of the jury? Why isn't there representation from the European Fringe? The independent theatre? We are besieging this Theatre until the jury resigns! RAW is the New Anarchy Movement, we'll save theatre and Europe!

JANUS:

This is beyond insane! I love it!

GROTOWSKI:

Remarkable! The uprising of the audience! Certainly, a new world we're witnessing!

MIA:

That was ... I don't even know what that was. But we can't let this deter us.

KOVACH:

We won't waste time on losers like them. We've got our top three: Poland, Turkey, and the foetuses! All we need now is to vote and wrap it up.

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VIA:

What happened with the air-condition?

EDEN:

It must have broke down, I am sorry.

KOVACH:

Oh, no, no, no! Call the technicians of this theatre from hell!

EDEN:

Nobody is here, they've been on strike for days now, remember.

KOVACH:

Any windows to open?

EDEN:

The police ordered us not to open the windows.

(People start undressing to cool off.)

KOVACH:

It feels like an oven here! Grotowski, even your shows were never this crazy!

GROTOWSKI:

I am really feeling anxious. It is too hot and I feel dizzy. I think I have cancer and perhaps a Heart-condition. May we take a break?

MIA:

For fuck's sake - Grotowski, you don't have cancer, you are as healthy as a yeti! Kovach, stop with your whining and ramblings and let us get back to finish this fucking festival! Honey, is that Iranian food coming or not?!

EDEN:

Afghan.

MIA:

What Afghan?

EDEN:

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Afghan food. Not Iranian. I'll go and check.

MILA:

So - we have two shows to choose from. Let's just vote and go to the restaurant!

RICHARD

Mia!

MIA

Well... I'm sorry, but having top two shows from the East in the first edition of a European Theatre Festival, and one of those not even from the EU just doesn't seem right.

GROTOWSKI:

What are you suggesting? That we insert a token Western performance into consideration? Just like Western Europe often does with the East?

(Eden returns.)

MIA

We need to represent all of Europe, not just parts. Do you hear me? Edmund, you asserted that the best co-production was the French-German co-production, and it was the best show in the entire festival! And don't forget it is also trending with the bookies. And is it the number one right? And plus it is about Nazism! I mean against Nazism.

BEATRICE:

Why don't we just add it to the two we've already shortlisted?

JANUS:

Why not add Denmark then? It's a Western country, right?

MILA:

I've got a solution! ... We should drop Turkey! Let's kill Turkey!

MIA:

Mila, please be quiet!

RICHARD:

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We can't exclude Turkey. They're a NATO ally.

VIA:

The Turkish show was so lovely!

GROTOWSKI:

It was an amazing show really.

JANUS:

Turkey has waited 36 years to become an EU member and counting.

VIA:

I visit Turkey every summer, it's undoubtedly a European country. It's the only place on Earth where I eat meat.

(Video - TURKEY.)

BEATRICE:

So we're all in favor of keeping Turkey in.

ALL JURY MEMBERS:

Yes.

EDEN:

You can decide not to award anyone. Instead, you can write a manifesto for the new theatre! Wake up! Listen to the voice of the audience outside!

MIA:

Honey, do not fucking interfere, I've told you already a thousand times! Who are you to speak in this distinguished company?! Do you fucking job! Go and check the delivery. We are fucking hungry! Clear?

EDEN:

Crystal.

(Eden exits.)

GROTOWSKI:

Mia ... The arts are ... Intricate, and picking a single Winner is near-impossible.

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VIA:

A valid point.

GROTOWSKI:

Can we split the award to three shows?

MIA:

No.

GROTOWSKI:

Can we decide that there is no winner?

MIA:

No!

RICHARD:

We need a winner. So, let's get this done. Let's continue!

VIA:

This is making me sick!

JANUS:

It's absurd. Richard, Mia, we can't trash three weeks of hard work and all our integrity to get bullied in this lousy finale!

(Eden returns with a gun.)

EDEN:

Vive le théâtre! Freedom for theatre!

(Eden shoots himself.)

KOVACH:

Call an ambulance!

(Eden's body is carried out.)

MIA:

Hello? Hello! We have an emergency at Theatre Union. Yes, I know the riots are raging outside. But this is inside - a man killed himself ... I know, just get here somehow.

(Jury members return.)

VIA:

He's dead.

GROTOWSKI:

The protesters actually made way for the ambulance! But the paramedics couldn't save him. He was gone.

BEATRICE:

What was his name?

JANUS:

Oh my god! We had him with us for three weeks, he looked after us - brought food and drinks daily. Guided us through Brussels from venue to venue. Fuck us!

GROTOWSKI:

He always had insightful comments about the shows.

JANUS:

And we never bothered to learn his name!

(Eden's ghost walks onto the stage.)

EDEN'S GHOST:

I'm a founding member of RAW, The Radical Audience Warriors. I was the inside man for our premiere, our introduction to the world. Inspired by Artaud's rebirth of theatre! You had an opportunity to create a beautiful theatre revolution tonight. Instead, you've chosen to be blinded by your own egos and personal agendas. Instead, you've chosen to glorify and empower your cowardly theatre for the petit bourgeoisie since you, like them, keep your asses on soft armchairs whilst watching Europe suffocating in pollution, hatred and nationalism. Even this show, this in which we are currently performing right now, suffers from the same symptoms because of the vanity, conformism and verbal diarrhea of the authors.

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We are not free. The sky can still fall on our heads, theatre's here to show us that. To touch life, one should believe in the meaning of life, Renewed through theatre. Either we adopt new ways, reach poetic heights with modern means, or surrender to disorder, hunger, blood, pandemics and War. Through my suicide, I performed my Ultimate Theatre Act - My masterpiece. Was there a bolder, braver, more impactful act in this festival? Can you still judge those mediocre shows now? RAW shall mobilize thousands of theatre-goers, awakening artists to create with us - craft with us a new Earth. Liveable and loveable. We, the Radical Audience Warriors, challenge directors, actors, playwrights - all artists - to surpass our theatrical heights or to kill themselves!

(Eden's ghost exits.)

MILA:

Holy shit, what was that? Mia, did you see...

MIA:

I saw it.

MILA:

Beatrice, Zoh ... that scared the shit out of me!

MIA:

Remember Banquo's ghost at dinner table of Macbeth and Lady Macbeth?

RICHARD:

I'm scared. I'm damn scared.

KOVACH:

I don't want to die.

(Fade out.)

(Fade in.)

(Same space. Police Officer Esmeralda is questioning the jury.)

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA:

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Just so I'm clear. You had him around for weeks, and no one knows his name? Anyone?

Your accounts department should have it, right?

MIA:

I'm not sure ... He was an intern ... I don't think he was billing under his own name ... Some intern agency billed us for his services. I'll have to check ...

MILA:

He mentioned he was Desdemona.

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA:

Desdemona?

VIA:

No, no, it was during a conversation about "Othello" - the play, you know - Shakespeare, um ...

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA:

Yes. Yes. Anyone know where he's from?

MIA:

I think the UK. He mentioned escaping after Brexit. It got to him ...

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA:

Any reason he could commit suicide? ... Besides Brexit? Well, that might have been enough ...

JANUS:

He seemed troubled most of the time.

BEATRICE:

He claimed it was his grand artistic act, his ultimate theatrical spectacle.

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA.

When did he say this? Did anyone else hear it? Did he leave any suicide note?

BEATRICE:

He told us after he passed away.

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MIA:

Wait. Cut her some slack - she's stressed. Shocked. Don't take her word for it, she's a playwright - you know, a dreamer.

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA:

Until suicide's confirmed, none of you can leave the city. Got it?

GROTOWSKI:

How long is that going to take, officer?

POLICE OFFICER ESMERALDA:

A few days, tops. ... Stay put!

(Police Officer Esmeralda exits the room.)

(The jury freezes. Grotowski takes the scene.)

GROTOWSKI:

Tonight is a Holiday. The night that is holy. Is there a holier day than the day a man gave his life for theatre? A youthful soul took his own life, for theatre! Oh, such a tragic and noble act! He made me feel shame for my own wasted theatrical life! What role played I in this decay of European theatre? I am responsible! I bear the blame! And I plead guilty! King Lear felt no less grief for his tragic fate than I now do for myself. Once a director, a demiurge, I have become but a pointless personage. What could I have done more rightly? Today, the companies where I once created my finest shows insist: Age is unnecessary! Out of ten I kindly aided in crafting their careers, nine stab me in the back. My own children care not for me! My dearest daughter, for whom I stayed awake through nights when flu or stomach pains she bore, cares more about the tempests in Greenland than the storm in my heart! My son affirmed that he wouldn't visit me unless I seek "rehab". How can I seek rehab? How can I declare - "I am Grotowski, and I am an alcoholic"? I would be marring a good name. Why must I bear the name of the famed Polish theatre revolutionary? The great Jerzy Grotowski! What an absurd and tragical namesake! "History repeats itself - the second time as a whore!" Argued Karl Marx, my star in the nightly sky! I am that second time, I am nothing but a whore.

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Or did he truly say: first as a tragedy, the second time as a farce? No matter. I am a farce, yet - today - whore suits me better.

Does any here know me? Why, this is not Grotowski. Doth Grotowski walk thus, speak thus? Where are his eyes? ... Who is it that can tell me who I am? "Grotowski's shadow." replies the fool.

(Unfreeze.)

RICHARD:

What a mess! ... Well, we're stuck here, so we might as well finish our job.

MIA:

How can you be so insensitive?!

GROTOWSKI:

Mia's got a point. We can't just move on like this.

VIA:

Richard, the man lost his life.

RICHARD:

And so what? The entire artistic community of Europe is waiting for your call. The countries have set up events in theatres. Tonight is like Theatre's Christmas; we can't let Europe down.

ZOH:

Maybe we should release a statement about the awards being cancelled due to force majeure. People will Understand.

RICHARD:

I understand this is unfortunate, even tragic ... But let's be real. This guy was just an intern, not one of the jurors.

MILA:

He was a human being!

JANUS:

He worked for the festival.

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RICHARD:

He was just loosely connected to the festival. You don't even know his name, for God's sake.

BEATRICE:

Richard ...

RICHARD:

Not you, Beatrice! ... I know it's tough, but listen. This festival needs a Winner. I need a fucking winner! We all go through hard times, and we help each other out. This guy, he needed assistance, but he didn't know how to ask for it. But that's where we come in, Helping each Other out. That's why we're all here, united. When I'm in a corner, you lend a hand, and I return the favour when you're in need.

Remember Via? Last year, you were on The brink of selling your apartment, because nobody wanted to neither hire your wrongly accused husband nor you ... But then your husband landed that major opera gig? A little gesture. Just a small one.

And Janus, stand-up! Your company mass produces silly-billy mainstream musicals constantly at a loss, but suddenly, you're in A-list venues around Europe - winning awards? You're welcome!

Mila, your father and I go way back, Since you were a little girl. You wouldn't want to let your old man down, right? Zoh, my friend, I know you're all about progress, equality, and humanism. But deep inside, you know this is a cutthroat world and when the bigger dogs come in Parliament you'll need a comrade.

Beatrice, lovely Beatrice, you aimed high for this jury presidency. You wanted it so bad. So bad! The only non-EU jury member! From Israel, no less! Your feminist sisters are watching, and seeing you fail here, well, they'll have a field day.

Grotowski, the man of honor. The epitome of integrity and uncompromising professionalism. Disciplined, educated and wise, a true European renaissance soul. Where's your staunch professionalism now? I know where is you professionalism, it's here.

Lastly, Kovach, I hate to bring it up, but keeping late-night secret parties secret? That's not your forte ...

MIA:

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Richard, can't we postpone it for a day or two?

RICHARD:

We can't afford that luxury. We've got to fulfil our European patriotic duty. We can't let the Russians catch wind of this turmoil. It would spell the complete downfall of Europe!

MIA:

Understood. So, my friends, I know it's a tough pill to swallow. But we've must suck it up. Please let's make a choice and pick the winner.

MILA:

Richard. Mia. You are right - We can't let down the European audience or betray the theatre community. That is exactly why we have to stop and tell them what happened here tonight. A young man among us, whose name we didn't even bother to get to know, chose to end his life as "the Ultimate Theatrical Act." We should do justice to that young man and make sure European theatre hears about his scream, his cry for the re-birth of theatre. What about the audience we never really spoke of. What did the people think? The European audience deserved better. People have traveled from every corner of the world to be here for the first European Theatre Festival! Audiences showed their love for theatre, their love for life - everywhere. Theatre still thrives, because human spirit still yearns for live experiencnces. Presence is all! The rest is silence.

RICHARD:

Nice Composition, school kid!

GROTOWSKI:

We have a duty to share the story of his demise; we can't let it be concealed.

RICHARD:

Listen, old man - shut your mouth! We're not uttering a word about this. The suicide of a mentally unstable guy who wasn't even an EU citizen won't ruin my festival!

(Suddenly, Philip barges into the room, gripping a gun, visibly agitated.)

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PHILIP:

Ah, there you are! The fucking jury ... an the boss himself!

MIA:

Please, calm down ...

PHILIP:

You just wouldn't listen to us! There is no way back now! We crossed the Rubicon! Eden sacrificed his life as the Ultimate Theatrical Act, and now, you now have to reveal Eden's ultimate act to the whole world.

VIA:

His name was Eden. It means Delight Oh, boy! You shouldn't have gone!

RICHARD: *(to Philip)*

Listen ... I'm the President of The European Parliament. Put the gun down, and I promise nothing bad will happen. I will phone the police right now.

PHILIP:

Don't you dare! All of you, put your phones away!

(Everyone puts down their phones on the floor close to Philip.)

Conman! The European Parliament President - my ass! Your corruption's out in the open. RAWleaks just blew the whistle, revealing documents exposing your crimes - the corruption dance you've been doing with Qatar for visa exemptions, energy deals, the World Cup. The Gulfgate scandal has only just begun.

RICHARD:

I can explain ...

PHILIP:

You and your cronies in the European Parliament have been on the Gulf countries' payroll, serving their interests right here in Europe.

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MIA:

What's your name?

PHILIP:

It's Philip.

MIA:

I am Mia, Philip, the director of the European Theatre Festival

PHILIP:

I know who you are.

MIA:

Philip, let the authorities handle this. Put the gun down.

PHILIP:

Let's turn the spotlight on you, shall we? Do you even comprehend the role you're playing? Facilitating money laundering, enabling a festival that's nothing but a corrupt politician's image makeover, through theatre-washing, a guise for the Parliament mafia syndicate? And the rest of you. On the ground now! You're the quintessential theatre bourgeoisie, peddling the notion of theatre as mere ornamentation for society. You probably see us Radical Audience Warriors as a bunch of Lunatic fanatics, eh? Even this con-man and his graft-ridden MEPs deserve a nod of appreciation. They actually believed in theatre, more than you do. They thought this festival was big enough to bury their crimes.

GROTOWSKI:

Your friend pulled off an unparalleled artistic act by taking his own life. We know you're serious.

PHILIP:

We're zealots of seriousness as Susan Sontag put it.

(Richard covertly tries to make a call on his second phone that he hadn't surrendered.)

Drop it, now!

(Richard complies and places his phone on the floor.)

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RICHARD:

I am a villain! I lie. I am not a fool to speak well of myself; fools flatter. My consciousness carries a thousand distinct voices, and each voice tells a different tale, and each tale condemns me as a villain. I know nobody will pity me if I die. Nobody loves me, but my heart is lighter than my appearance.

(Philip listens, captivated by the strange magic in Richard's words.)

PHILIP:

Well, well ... Richard III's monologue. I've told you, he takes the theatre seriously!

RICHARD:

Let me go! I love theatre too. I can transfer money to your account right now! A million Euros, just like that! Allow me to call captain Catesby, he'll send a chopper. On the theatre roof.

GROTOWSKI:

A helicopter, a helicopter! My kingdom for a helicopter!

PHILIP:

You're nothing but a swindler!

RICHARD:

Two million! Philip, I am a revolutionary too! My family has been revolutionary for generations! My grandfather wrote the lyrics for "Bella, ciao"!

PHILIP:

Shut up! It's time for you to wake up! This very night, across 52 European lands, artists and audiences are awaiting your decree. Tonight, you decide the course of European theatre.

VIA:

You're giving us far too much credit. Who cares about our opinions? Who even cares about theatre, for God's sake?

ZOH:

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Philip, that gun contradicts your vision and ideals. Put it down.

PHILIP:

Release the jury statement now! Lay bare Eden's demise. Tell Europe he perished to rouse European theatre's artists from their slumber, inspiring them to forge ahead through the tempest and craft a New Earth, one that's liveable and lovable.

(Mila runs to Philip and hugs him. A struggle breaks out as Richard lunges at Philip, attempting to wrestle the gun from him. A gun is fired. Everything halts. Richard lies lifeless on the floor.)

MIA:

Hello, can you hear me? I'm calling from the theatre union, we need another ambulance. There has been another shooting. No, we're not decimating each other! This is only the second shooting tonight! Can you please send somebody now?! ...

(Mia scans the room, capturing everyone's stillness. Richard's lifeless body rests on the floor.)

MILA:

Richard shot himself.

MIA:

It was an accident.

VIA:

No one's to blame.

BEATRICE:

An unfortunate accident.

GROTOWSKI

An accident.

ZOH:

Yes.

JANUS:

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We are all in agreement then.

MILA:

Vive le theatre!

PHILIP

Freedom for theatre!

(Philip and Mila leave together.)

ZOH:

I'll draft the press release detailing Eden's demise and this accident.

(Beatrice passes out. Heavily drugged. Grotowski falls down drunk.)

MIA

Hi, It's me again from The Theatre Union! I know, thank you. Glad to hear it's on its way. But we need two more ambulances. What? No, there's not been a shooting here. I'm not pulling your leg, the situation is really serious. We have a possible alcohol related accident and something to do with drugs or shock. They just lost consciousness. Please send somebody!

(Ambulance sirens wail outside.)

MIA:

Theatre. I was just 7 years old when I fell in love with theatre. One night, during the reception following my mother's show premiere, I put a pile of food onto my plate and hid beneath the huge catering table. She was an actress, and she always brought me along to the theatre since she couldn't afford a babysitter. On that particular night, a boy of my age also took refuge under the table. We shared the meal, enjoyed the laughter, and innocently played with the food on the plate. Chicken wings, french fries, grilled peppers, and pickles all became the actors on plate-stage. That day we made "Organic Theatre". The boy's name was Marco.

That night, I fell in love with theatre, men and food. As I grew up, learnt to truly listen to theatre, uncovering a world beyond mere words. Theatre was my destiny.

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Over the years, I climbed the ladder, facing various challenges, bureaucratic hurdles, directors' grandiose delusions, actors' whims, technicians' tantrums, and political pressures. Around me only egos, egos, egos, egos. Egos grew uncontrollably. Amidst this, I tirelessly tried to appease everyone. Regrettably, I gradually became part of the system I had always despised. But tonight - Eden shook me at the core.
*I felt a Funeral in my Brain
And Mourners to and fro
Kept treading - treading - till it seemed
That Sense was breaking through.*

Philip and RAW are right. We lost our way. We lost our way in life, and we lost our way in theatre. I will start all over again and reclaim theatre and return it to itself! We need a new life on stage. It's dawn, excellent and fair. For a new Earth, livable and lovable.

KOVACH:

(Enters in wedding gown.)

Good evening! My name is Rose ... It has always been Rose. Rosalind, as you like it.

All the world's a stage, and all the men and women merely players. They have their exits and their entrances. I've entered as a man. And I'll leave as a woman. The woman I always felt I am. Free at last.

THE END.