

ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANTIFASCIST

(The Farce of the Authoritarians)

By A.J. Schaar

Based on ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST

(And Other Subversives)

By Dario Fo and Franca Rame

(For Richard Baird. Maniac.)

ROLES (in order of speaking):

CAPTAIN

MANIAC

OFFICER

THE SPORTY CHIEF

REPORTER

ACT ONE, SCENE ONE.

A normal office in a police headquarters. A desk, a filing cabinet, a few chairs, a computer, a telephone, a coat rack, a window, two doors.

CAPTAIN: (*flicking through papers concerning the Maniac who is sitting, cool, calm and collected*) Aha.. this isn't the first time you've *impersonated an important person*¹!... It says here, you passed yourself off twice as a surgeon...

MANIAC: (*agreeing*) In the operating *theatre*.

CAPTAIN: Once as the Maneuver Captain of the United States Marksmanship Unit²...

MANIAC: Trained for lethality; the best in America, and the competitive shooting world.

CAPTAIN: Three times as a bishop...

MANIAC: Once, a Navy engineer...

CAPTAIN: In total, you have been arrested, let's see...two and three, five...one, three...two...

MANIAC: (*to us*) ...I've seen some chickens count better than this. But then, they were mathemachickens...

CAPTAIN: *Eleven* times this equals?... Wait.

MANIAC: (*to us*) Do you know why the equal sign's always respectful? It knows it's not greater or less than. Mm.

CAPTAIN: This *does* equal eleven. *Eleven* priors! *This is your twelfth arrest!*...

MANIAC: Yes. *This is my twelfth arrest.* But I'd like to point out to you, Captain, I have never once been *convicted*... I have a record, it's long but it's clean.

CAPTAIN: Well...I don't know what little *games* you've played to get away *clean* until now...but this time I assure you, that *I'll* get your long record *dirty*...you get it?

MANIAC: Oh, I get it, Captain... A *long, clean record* getting *dirty* can be tempting to the best of us! *Ha ha ha ha ha*.

CAPTAIN: Yes, laugh, that's the spirit³...This is laughable... This complaint says you *claimed* to be a psychiatrist, a professor, and a former professor at the University of Berkley⁴...Do you know that this kind of *fraudulent claim* comes with *jail time*?

MANIAC: Yes, *if* the fraudulent claim were made by a sane man...but I'm a maniac: a certified maniac... look at my *medical* record, it's even longer and cleaner (sexy): I've been put away *sixteen* times...and always for the same reason: I have a mania for acting, it's called "histriomania," which comes from *istromania*, which, as we *all know*, means... *actor*! I've moonlit on stages, all different roles, but my *profession* is the *theatre of truth*, where my fellow actors must be *real people*...who don't know how to *act*...but on the other hand...I don't have

¹ More literal alt: ...Dressed up in disguises, is it?

² Originally: *Once as the captain of Bersaglieri* (an Italian marksmen unit of the time)

³ *Si, fai lo spiritoso*—spiritoso is a musical term indicating a piece should be played in a lively, animated...a spirited way...Perhaps a note from Fo for the playing of the text?

⁴ Originally: *University of Padua*

the means...I couldn't pay them...I applied for grants from the NEA... but they really only help *big institutions*⁵ and all *I've* been is institutionalized...

CAPTAIN: Well, this time, I'm going to throw the book at you.

MANIAC: No, don't *tell* me you're going to throw the book at me, *show* me. This is the *theatre*.

CAPTAIN: This says that as a psychiatrist, you charged *twenty-thousand dollars* for a visit...

OFFICER: (*who is behind Maniac*) Charge him with murder, sir! ...Making a killing!...

MANIAC: It's the normal charge for a "real" psychiatrist... who has studied their subject, as I have, for many years!

CAPTAIN: Sure, but you, where have you ever studied?

MANIAC: I, for twenty years *I* have studied, at sixteen different asylums *I* have studied thousands of maniacs, just like me, day after day, and even at night, because I, unlike the "real" psychiatrists, *I slept* with them...sometimes *two at a time* because there never seem to be enough beds. In any case, inquire with any "real" psychiatrist and see if I have not *perfectly diagnosed* that schizophrenic who filed those charges you're holding against me.

CAPTAIN: The twenty-thousand dollars... have been *perfectly diagnosed*.

MANIAC: But Captain... I was forced to take that money, for his own good!

CAPTAIN: Aha, for his own good? Part of his therapy?

MANIAC: Sure... If I hadn't given him a truly huge bill, you believe that poor man, and more importantly his poor family, would have believed in me?... If I had charged them just five-thousand, say, they would have thought: "He must be a *pretty worthless* psychiatrist, maybe just out of school, or still a student: pretty worthless." But instead, after their initial *shock* at seeing the bill... after their first *violent outburst*, they were left *breathless*, and they thought: "Who is this guy? The Eternal Father? And they went away as happy as if it were Easter⁶ after they paid me...And they cried too, with real *emotion*.

CAPTAIN: ...You tell it well...All raconteurs tell tales like these in skillful and amusing ways...

MANIAC: It's not a tall tale, Captain... Why, even the Secretary of Health and Human Services⁷ says...a Big Beautiful Bill's the best thing for the health of Americans!

CAPTAIN: Sure, sure... *Now* I'm taking you seriously. ..I mean, just look at your business card, which you've written on a *recipe* card...if I'm not mistaken it says, "Professor Antonio Rabbi. Psychiatrist. Former professor at Berkeley..." You expect me to believe that's you?

MANIAC: First of all, I, I am a professor, a real one... a professor of portraiture... in pencil sketches and in paints...I teach nights at the church round the corner.

CAPTAIN: All right, fine... so say you're a professor! Even if you are, it says here: "Professor of *Psychiatry*."

MANIAC: No it doesn't.

⁵ *I applied for grant from the Ministry of Entertainment... but I have no political support...*

⁶ *Alt interpretation: Resurrection Day.*

⁷ *Even Freud says that a big fat bill is the best thing for the doctor... and the patient!*

CAPTAIN: It *does* say that.

MANIAC: No it *doesn't*.

CAPTAIN: Yes it *does*.

MANIAC: All right, it *does* say "Psychiatrist" ...*after* a period. ...Of course, you know syntax and punctuation? Then take a good look. It says, "Professor Antonio Rabbi. Period.

Psychiatrist." The card doesn't say *I* am a psychiatrist, the card is just *saying*... psychiatrist. ...The *card* just happens to say that! It could have said anything: botanist, herbivore, archeologist, arthritic... And, anyhow, *lots* of people have important, responsible titles right next to their names on *their* business cards... that doesn't mean that they have any knowledge or ethics!

CAPTAIN: I see, and the same logic applies to the rest of this card, "former professor at Berkeley?"

MANIAC: No. You've got me on something there...Ecco mi...You told me...you knew syntax and punctuation, and I *believed* you, but I should have known!... Americans don't *learn* the English language, they don't learn any languages at all. You probably can't even read.

CAPTAIN: I can *read*...

MANIAC: Then you *did* see the comma?

OFFICER: I can see the comma!

CAPTAIN: Eh, yes, I see the comma *now*!...

OFFICER: (*to the Maniac*) He hadn't noticed.

MANIAC: Aha, you're right! (*to the Captain*) He's right! "He *hadn't* noticed!" And now we know the *fact* that *this person* does not always *pay attention*! He can't be bothered! He'd rather just take an *innocent man* and *bang him in jail*!

CAPTAIN: I do not *bang men in jail* just because I missed a comma!

MANIAC: No... you may *bang men in jail* for all kinds of reasons, that's true... How would I know... I know you can't read...And you don't pay attention... How did you rise to this station in life... Who promoted you... Let me finish! If I say, "you, bang innocent men in jail," I might be saying, "you comma bang innocent men in jail" as if it were a *suggestion*...as if I had called out to you from across the room, "you, bang innocent men in jail!" ...*Without* the comma, it would be a matter of *fact*: "you *bang innocent men in jail*"—that's a flat accusation, *without* the comma. The comma changes the whole meaning of the sentence, you see. The comma is of *huge* importance. *With* a comma, the phrase, "you bang innocent men in jail" could be *sarcastic*, even *incredulous*... "you, bang innocent men in jail?" You see, the comma is *everything*!

And when we look at this card here we *notice* that it says (*he grimaces and laughs to himself*) it says, "Former professor at, comma, Berkeley." ...Which isn't a sentence at all, it is *meaningless*!...You see, this card doesn't prove that I tried to impersonate anyone... This card, this *recipe* card, *proves* that I'm a *maniac*! Go and persecute the *fools* who fall for this card!

Their ignorance is undermining our society!

CAPTAIN: Are you calling me a fool?

MANIAC: No, I think you just can't read... If you want, I can give you some lessons. I'll give you a good price.

CAPTAIN: Just stop right there! Drop the act, actor! Start talking truth to me now. If it's true that you're an actor, then maybe you're just *acting* the part of a maniac now... Sure... I bet you're as sane a man as me!

OFFICER: Maybe even saner.

MANIAC: Hm, well I don't know... I know your profession can certainly lead to some psychotic traumas and breaks... Let me look in your eye... (*pulls the Captain's lower eyelid open*)...

CAPTAIN: That's assault! I'm being assaulted! (*to the Officer*) Write it up!

MANIAC: I'll write it up for you. You get some rest. (*to us*) ...Peace officers can get so agitated...

CAPTAIN: Sit your ass in that chair or I'll cuff you to it.

MANIAC: You can straitjacket me... but you can't cuff me, Captain. Of course you, as a police person, know and uphold the law? So you *know* that according to California's Welfare and Institutions Code 5150: When an officer believes that a person is a danger to him/herself or others as the result of a mental illness, the officer shall take the person into custody and place the person in an approved mental health facility for a 72-hour treatment and evaluation. It is *unlawful* for you to do otherwise.

CAPTAIN: Aha, I see, you also know the law...

MANIAC: Know the law? I know everything! I've been studying the law for twenty years!

CAPTAIN: What are you, three hundred years old? Where did you study the law?

MANIAC: In mental hospitals! There's so much to learn on the inside! You get to know a better class of people. There was this paranoic prosecutor... he gave me lessons... he was a genius! He taught me Roman law, modern law, Murphy's law...Scouts law!: Be trustworthy, loyal, helpful, friendly, courteous, kind, obedient, cheerful, thrifty, brave, clean, and reverent to the views and beliefs of others... I know ALL the laws! I can prove it, interrogate me!

CAPTAIN: I don't think I have enough time. And I don't think you *do* know the law. I don't see a judge here in your "acting resume" (*his file*)... Not even a lawyer?! Not once?

MANIAC: Oh no, I wouldn't want to be a *lawyer*... At least, I wouldn't want to defend. That's a passive action. I would want to beat down... *and* beat up... and repress...and persecute! I am one of *you*, dear Captain! You don't mind if I call you dear, do you?

CAPTAIN: (*taken by the speech*) Not in front of the *fellas*, geez!...

MANIAC: My lips are sealed!...

CAPTAIN: Have you passed yourself off as a judge once or twice? Maybe you didn't get caught? (*indicates the file*)

OFFICER: If he did, a few more rulings would make sense!...

MANIAC: I'm afraid I haven't *yet* had the occasion... But oh, how I would love to! To be a *judge* would be the best of all the parts to play! No one could ever make me retire! When you're playing a regular worker, one of the *proletariat*, at 60, maybe 55, you'll be thrown out

on the street, because you've got a little slow, just got a little slower; you're moving the needle down on *all the world's* efficiency, I guess... but for the *judge* at 55, his life begins... No, no... as one human after the other is replaced by some new technology... half-baked A.I.⁸... As other humans still toil in sweatshops, in mine shafts, in troll farms, for Disney⁹...As one corporation after the other chooses profits over people in an experiment of total exploitation that can only end in the end of our total existence!...¹⁰ The judge is safe, for now; the judge has all the world before him. And... the more useless the judge may become, as a human, the more useful he may become to certain *exploiters* with a will to *power*...and total *control*! The exploiters trust only the most *senile* judges with the most *serious* decisions!... Let me show you what I mean...

(*lights shift dark, music underscores*) ...The same people you see wrapped in cardboard and cords on the street could be the same people wrapped in those judges' robes, with their glasses hanging on a chain around their necks so that they won't forget them... Imagine, if the characters dressed in cardboard on the street had the *power* to *destroy* or *save* if-ever, whenever they wanted... If *they* could hand out a life sentence for someone who threatened their cardboard by saying, "I think it will rain tomorrow." No! Fifty years for you, thirty for you, twenty for you, *none* for you if you pay the right price, because in a *truly free* market, even *justice* can be bought! Ah, yes, yes... the *judge*... what wouldn't *I* pay to play that part, just once...

(*lights shift magnificent, music underscores*) They were always *supreme* arbiters... *superior*... but today? You can do ANYTHING and still be a judge! You can even betray your solemn oath in full view of the world. Talk about liberating. ...It used to mean something, that oath, to uphold the Law of the Land *without fear or favor*! That used to mean *something*, but today?

(*lights shift back to office, music fades, we see the Maniac as he has been*) A judge, a necessarily non-political role, can just be *overtly partisan*! ...That's madness!! And we know who they are!? A *conservative judge*. A *progressive judge*. ...If they can't leave their politics outside on the courthouse steps, that alone should be disqualifying! But *no*, today a judge can ignore *precedent*, ignore *evidence*, ignore *common sense*, and just fear and favor their favorite opinions like the world's their corrupt little Pinterest page, and *they'll still have a job as a judge... for life*! Bravo I say, *bravissimo*!

CAPTAIN: ...Are you finished? I know I am. So sit down and *shut up*. (*roughly pushes the Maniac back into a chair*)

MANIAC: (*flails hysterically barking, greatly alarming the police, then a low dog sound*)

Gniam...Gniam... I will bite at you!

⁸ Workers on manufacturing lines, and at desks...

⁹ In the mines and in unions

¹⁰ Even the bankers and big businessmen

CAPTAIN: ...You'll bite at *who*?

OFFICER: (to Captain) He'll bite at *you*!

MANIAC: Bless you. Gniam gniam... Gniam gniam... Gniam gniam... Gniam gniam...

CAPTAIN: (to the Officer) Why are you just *watching* this? You sit him in that chair! Now!

OFFICER: No sir, he bites!

MANIAC: Yes sir, I bites! And I'm rabid, too! I'm a *mad* dog. God, I'm *mad*! Grrr-rr-rr-rr!

I'm berrrzerk! Infurrriated! Foaming at the mouth! Gniam griam!...

CAPTAIN: You're a goddamned *maniac*, is what you are!

MANIAC: *Histriomaniac*. Which, as we *all know*, means... (waits) actor! Thank you. (he bows)

CAPTAIN: (vividly unnerved) Bravo, then. Bravissimo... Now, be a good boy, that's it, sit, stay. Good. How would you like to go play outside now, hm? I'm gonna shut you outside and forget I ever saw you. Would you like that, good boy, would you, hm?

MANIAC: No! Don't kick me out there, captain, please! I like it here... with the police... I feel safe. ...Say what you will, but in many ways, it's still more dangerous out on the streets than in here... People are cruel out there, too, driving in cars, like they're *all maniacs*, worse than ever after the pandemic, and they're honking their horns, and they're squealing their brakes, and they're slamming their doors, and *not using turn signals*, and *crushing* all that's standing in their path. No! Let me stay here with you... I'll help you make your other suspects talk!... I'll threaten to bite *them*, or maybe just *bite them*... or *blow them up with nitro glycerin*! Like me, it's highly unstable!

CAPTAIN: STOP. TALKING. You *stop talking* now or I *will make you stop*... I've had about enough of this!

MANIAC: You think you've had enough?? I'm telling you, you've got to keep me here or else... (he sees his purpose) Or else I'll throw myself out of that window!... What floor are we on? The third? Good enough! I'll throw myself out of that window, and when I land way down there on the street, and I'm crushed and I'm bleeding, I'll gasp... because it won't be a quick death (not from the third floor, I'll gasp, a lot)... and people will come and point cameras at me and I'll tell them... always with a gasp... that it was you who brought me to this. You said, you'd had enough!... (emotional) Get out of the way, I'm throwing myself out that window!

CAPTAIN: Please, stop, wait! Don't do it! (to the Officer) Bolt the window.
(the Officer does)

MANIAC: (no less emotional) I'll throw myself down the *stairwell* then! (he goes to the door)

CAPTAIN: For God's sake, *that is enough*! (to the Officer) Lock that door and keep the key.
(the Officer locks the door with a key)

MANIAC: No, throw the key out of the window!
(the stunned Officer goes to the window)

CAPTAIN: Yes, throw the key out of the window! No, wait! Put the key into this drawer and lock the drawer.
(the Officer does)

MANIAC: Now throw *that* key out of the window!

CAPTAIN: Yes, NO!

MANIAC: Put the key in your mouth and swallow it!

CAPTAIN: NO. *(to the Officer)* Give me the key. *(he opens the door, then to the Maniac)* GO. I changed my mind. If you like, throw yourself down the stairwell. Whatever you want.

You're making me crazy! Get out!

MANIAC: No! Don't make me go, please! I clearly need assistance! I'm a danger to myself, peace officer! I am deranged!

CAPTAIN: And I am not trained for this! GET! OUT! *(he closes the door on the MANIAC's face and has a big sigh)* Finally...

OFFICER: Captain? Sir. You asked me to remind you about that appointment. I'm afraid that you're 5 minutes late...

CAPTAIN: What time is it now? *(looks at his watch)* Oh, for the love of God... That *maniac* made me lose all track of time. Well come on, hurry up, let's go out this way.

(They go out through the second door. The door the Maniac was pushed through opens slightly. We hear his voice outside.)

MANIAC: Captain? Now, don't be mad with me. I just came back to get my papers...

Captain? Won't you answer me? Come on now, talk to me!

(he enters)...No one's here! Well, I'll just help *myself* to my papers... There's my business *recipe* card... Why, there's my whole police file! I'll just tear it up. And I'll throw it out the window. No more need to talk about that. That should please the Captain. And here's another file! Who's in here? What have you done?...

(Reads) "Aggravated theft... in a pharmacy." Drug prices what they are, it's the *pharmacy* that should be charged for aggravated theft... No. I rule that these charges be dropped.

(He tears up the file, chucks it out the window, opens the filing cabinet) Who else is in here? *(he bangs on the cabinet)* All rise! *(to the paperwork)* Silence, silence, order in the court! Justice has arrived! And I decree that all these charges be lost in a great bonfire! *(He takes out a lighter.)* Wait, what is this one?

(Reads) "Investigation in progress... recommending the possible *dismissal* of Captain Bertozzo from his police service!..." *(gasps!)*

(The phone rings; the Maniac picks it up.) Hello? This is the office of Captain Bertozzo. Who is this, please? ...No, I'm sorry but if you don't tell me who you are I *won't* put you through, there are maniacs that call sometimes, you know. ...You're, what was that? ...You're the Police Chief!

Is it really you? ...No, but. ...What a pleasure. The Police Chief, himself! ...What are you wearing? ...Sporty.—No, no reason. Where are you calling from? ...From the *fourth floor*, of course you are, how stupid of me. Captain Bertozzo was just saying—what was that? ...Who am I?

...Oh, I bet you can guess! ...What do you mean you don't have time for this. You don't have time for an old colleague? (Hint hint?) Come on, now, and guess... (*almost to himself*) Andrews? (*to the phone*) Yes, you guessed it in one! I am Andrews! ...In from out of town, that's right. ...What am I doing here?—Never mind about that. What did you want to say to Bertozzo? ...No, he can't come to the phone, just tell me.

...A higher judge is being sent to continue the investigation into his actions? Sent from Washington¹¹ you say? On behalf of the *president*¹²? No kidding. To possibly overturn that recommendation for his *dismissal*? Ah, “possibly,” just “possibly” overturn, yes.

...Oh, oh, Bertozzo is *laughing* now, can you hear him? (*laughs as Bertozzo*) ...What was that, Chief? Yes, of course, it's all well and good for *him* to laugh, while *you're* stuck in the middle... The press, of course, the press know all about the incident... No of course *you* don't want to be seen to condone *police brutality*... No of course you don't want to have to take a stand against your own precinct's captain or the *president*... I'm sure you'd rather hush the whole thing up, just throw the captain out the window! Am I right? Parum Pum Pum. ...You can laugh, Chief, that was a joke. (*laughs as Bertozzo*)...The press said what? Sorry I can't hear you over Bertozzo laughing—they said what? (*He laughs*) No sorry, that was *me* laughing that time; Bertozzo said, ‘they say a lot of things,’ they do, and then he—what was that? No of course *this is no laughing matter*. (*He gasps*) Chief, Bertozzo just told me to tell you that *he'd* laugh to see you and all the muckety muck brass in the muckety muck shit for a change! (*He blows a big fat raspberry*) Shame on you, Bertozzo. Did you hear that, Chief? He blew a big fat raspberry at you!...No, don't take it that way! Come on, get a hold of yourself and just tell me: how can we help you?

...You'll come down here to discuss this face-to-face? Well, that's just fine. ...And you need us to have a copy of all of the paperwork concerning the death of that antifascist...and a copy of the transcripts from the original hearing with Bertozzo... concerning that antifascist's death, of course... Yes, yes, of course, I'm looking at those papers as we speak... (*he grimaces and laughs to himself*) No, you're right, this *is* a serious business...

So, the *judge* you mentioned that's coming out from Washington, what was his name, did you say? ...Ah yes, Judge Malaprop, of course. Do, you know him already? ...No? Well. You soon

¹¹ Rome.

¹² Ministry.

will... No, I don't know him personally, yet, but I've *heard*... he's a *maniac*. ...Yes, *certifiable*, good old Judge Malaprop... Just ask any of his clerks how he behaves—or rather, don't—who knows what the *Judge* might do to them if they ever told the *truth* about him... Maybe the Judge would push *them* out a window! Ha haa! ...No, no, you're right *again*. This isn't funny.

...Okay. Well, we'll go ahead and get these papers copied for you right away. See you soon. Bye. ...No wait, wait! Bertozzo just said he has something else to say, he says it's *very funny*, just hang on (and please don't get upset, I sympathize with you, sir; I don't think this is funny; this is what *Bertozzo* is saying. Let's just hear him out together now, OK? OK.) OK, Bertozzo says: "If you stand in the way of Judge Malaprop's reversal, the president is going to send you to a Venezuelan jail, but *not* as a police chief, do you get it?"... (*roars with laughter, then to the phone*) That's Bertozzo laughing. (*to "Bertozzo"*) Ah-ah, he didn't like it, Bertozzo. He didn't think it was funny at *all*.

...Bertozzo says: "Maybe, once this is all over, it'll be funny then. You know... after you've been abducted off the street and flung into a plane flying out of the country faster than the DOJ could intercede on behalf of your Rights." ...Hm? Yes, maybe that's fair. Bertozzo, the Chief says, that when he gets down here, he's going to show you what police brutality means. Bertozzo asks, could you be more specific, Chief? Aha, you'll smash in his face. You call that brutality? That's not brutality. I'll show you. I'll show you all! (*The Maniac hangs up the phone, then throws the whole phone out the window, and then immediately searches for material to use*)

Get to work, Judge Malaprop! Time is short! I must prepare! An opportunity like this comes but once in a lifetime... A judge! At last, I can prove to the whole wide world that *I* am worthy of holding the most sacred office in secular society! Say that three times fast. Where did I put my...God, I'm so excited! If I can convince them that *I am a judge*, I can slam all of *them* in that chair...behind bars... into vans... shelters, loony bins!...Woe betide me if I fail in this! Let's start with the walk. (*The Maniac limps*) No that's a Senator... The neck should be more twisted. Like a circus horse (*The Maniac tries and gives up*) No that seems like a tech titan... there's something so strange about them. This walk should be more human, but slippery, with something more unexpected, *unnerving*... (*performs a series of short quick steps, sometimes the heel strongly first, he rocks on a cocked heel*) Yes, yes. Not bad. Now glasses, no glasses? Glasses? No glasses? ...No glasses...the right eye, just sort of half-closed?...reading a few words?... Yes, perhaps... and coughing? Ahem. Ahe-he-hem. No. No cough. Any ticks? I don't know... We'll let them come out naturally. Discover them. Mmhmm. Now, a mellifluous voice? A nasal voice? A good-natured voice with a laugh ha ha ha. "My dear *former* police captain, ha ha, I'm afraid you're no longer in charge of this fascist little precinct, ha ha ha!" No. I think the opposite. Cold, staccato, insolent tone, monotonous voice, sad look. A little myopic. Who uses glasses, but not on his face, he holds them, let's try it (*he leafs through papers holding glasses then points with the glasses*) "Pig executioner! Here they are! The files into your investigation!" No that's not him

at all. I must calm down. No, I see him now. Welcome, Judge! (*a peremptory tone*) Are these *all* the documents concerning this investigation? Let's see. Here's the recommendation of *dismissal* from the *lower court* judge. The facts concerning the so-called antifascist militant group; the one run by this male dancer (*must be "Antifa"*)... Well. (*He runs his hand inside the empty folder to make sure that he has missed nothing, then throws all the papers back into the file.*) You never know. Overlook nothing. A feather tips the scales of blind justice. Can't be too careful. (*By this time, the Maniac has taken a dark overcoat and a black hat from the coatrack. The Captain enters. He does not recognize the Maniac so attired, and has a moment of perplexity.*)

CAPTAIN: Good morning, how can I help you? Did you need something here?

MANIAC: (*grins, pleased*) ...You didn't recognize me. (*to us*) He didn't recognize me.

CAPTAIN: You?! Get out!

MANIAC: I just came back for my papers, dear.

CAPTAIN: GET OUT.

MANIAC: Good-ness! You're all maniacs in here! First that lunatic comes through here threatening to smash in your face...

CAPTAIN: (*pauses for a moment*) Who threatened to smash in my face?

MANIAC: A guy, with a turtleneck sweater.

CAPTAIN: —Who wants to smash in my face?

MANIAC: Yes, yours and another friend of yours (*snaps his fingers*) Angelo, Adrienne, no Andrews that was it. Captain Andrews; just came to me. (*he winks at us*)

CAPTAIN: Captain Andrews, of the Los Santos Port Authority Police?

MANIAC: How would I know.

CAPTAIN: Why does turtleneck guy want to smash in our faces?

MANIAC: Because of the raspberry.

CAPTAIN: —Raspberry?

MANIAC: Yes. Because of the big fat raspberry. On the phone. *And* all the laughing. (*to us*) ...He doesn't remember!

CAPTAIN: (*to us*) What is he saying? (*to the Maniac*) Is this one of your characters you're making up? The turtleneck sweater man?

MANIAC: No, no, he's real. Works on the 4th floor.

CAPTAIN: The turtleneck man?...

MANIAC: He has reason to think that *you wish him ill*; that you wish he'd off and be deported to a kind of a black site. Yes, I *think* I got that right.

CAPTAIN: —*Why* would he have reason to think *that*?

MANIAC: —*Why* would he *doubt* it?

CAPTAIN: ...I think you should go. Go, now, please. Begone.

MANIAC: I go. Perhaps forever. Or...perhaps we'll meet again. (*blows him a kiss*) But oh, will you recognize me?... (*to us*) He didn't recognize me... (*as he bows, the Captain...*)

CAPTAIN: (...shuts the door on the Maniac) I recognized him all along. Nothing escapes my notice. (the Captain sighs a big sigh then goes straight to the coatrack and finds it completely empty. He turns, opens the door and calls out) Officer?

(the Officer enters) Go stop that man who just left, it's the same man from before. Bring me his coat, and his hat... and his wallet, he stole them from me. Quickly now.

OFFICER: Right away, sir. (the Officer turns but stops at the door, speaking to someone who has stopped him just outside) Oh, excuse me, sir. Yes, sir, the Captain is here. Just a moment.

CAPTAIN: (at his desk, fumbling through sheets looking for the paperwork torn by the Maniac) Where are all the complaints??

OFFICER: Captain sir. The Chief's come down to see you. He's waiting just outside.

CAPTAIN: (the Captain raises his head from the desk; a little mad now, he shamles toward the door to stand in the doorway) Ha ha HA! You're gonna laugh when you hear what just happened, Chief... a *histrioniac* was in here just now, which, as we all know, means... actor, and HE pretended to be ME when it was HE talking to YOU, and then HE told ME... Ha ha HA!

VOICE OF THE SPORTY CHIEF: I said this is no laughing matter!

(A fist comes through the door and knocks the Captain flat on his back, unconscious. Beat. He raises his head to say)

CAPTAIN: (cont.) (little mad) ...I just want to finish my sentence. HE told ME... YOU wanted to smash in my face!...

MANIAC: (steps in over the Captain's body) And... Black Out!

(The Captain falls unconscious again. The manic laughs maniacally. All the lights go out.)

MANIAC: (cont. in darkness) Scene change music, please! 'As time goes by,' in a minor key, please! ...I'll hum it for you.Da-dy-da-dy-dee-dum...da-dy-da-dy-dee-dum...

(Scene change music begins.) Thank you!

ACT ONE, SCENE TWO.

MANIAC: (Beginning in blackness) Act one, scene two. Beginning in blackness. As the light returns (the light returns), we find ourselves in another office, similar to the first. The furniture's mostly the same, but it has been rearranged. On one wall hangs a portrait of the president... a mediocre work of portraiture. A window is still there, it is still open. It looks out from the fourth story now. The Maniac's already there, in the room, his back to the audience, face to the window. He is backlit as he stands there dashing. After a few moments of thrilling suspense... ..a turtleneck sweater man enters.

(A man in a turtleneck sweater enters and stops just inside the door, it is The Sporty Chief; the Maniac remains facing the window, backlit beautifully.)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*quietly, to the Officer who joins him*) So *who* is that? What does he want?

OFFICER: (*quietly*) Well, I'm not sure, Chief... But he entered with so much *authority*... I thought, *who is this guy?* The Eternal Father?... He told me to get you and Captain Bertozzo, said he needed to talk with you two.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*who has never stopped massaging his right hand*) He said, "he needed to talk"? ...That can't be good... (*braces himself, approaches the Maniac, a little obsequiously*) How are we this morning? I was told that you wanted to see me?

MANIAC: (*terrifyingly impassive, he barely beckons a good morning by lifting his hat*) Good morning. (*he pauses to gaze at the hand the Chief continues to massage*) What happened to your hand.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Ah... nothing. ...With whom do I have the pleasure?...

MANIAC: "Nothing" happened to your hand... So why do you massage it? Is it some kind of a tick?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Yes, that's it. It's a tick. But with *whom*... do I have the pleasure?!...

MANIAC: I met a bishop once who would massage his hand like that. ...He was a hypocrite.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Who are you??

MANIAC: Are you a hypocrite??

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*awkward, stunned*) No, for Heaven's sake... no... but...

MANIAC: (*changing his tone instantly*) No, of course, you're not. But that bishop, *he* was a hypocrite. *He* was a liar. *He* was always massaging his right hand. Just like that.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Look, I've stopped. Hey, let's shake?

MANIAC: (*does not even consider shaking hands*) You should see a good psychiatrist. That massaging yourself all the time is a symptom of guilt...insecurity...sexual dissatisfaction...Are you impotent?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: NO! (*he punches the table*)

MANIAC: AHA! And NOW the TRUTH comes out! You lied to me didn't you. Lied to my face. You told me that was a *tick* with your hand. It wasn't a *tick*. You punched someone, didn't you. Punched someone, yes. You punched them in the face, now didn't you.

CONFESS!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Confess?! Ah... (*way off balance, he laughs*) ah, I *do* confess, that I hate to see you standing! Have a seat. Let me take your hat and coat. And what is your name, sir?...

MANIAC: (*a steely beat*) How rude of me... (*he takes off his hat with a studied slowness*) I should remove my hat inside. I sometimes forget, you see; I'm susceptible to chill... And that big window's wide open, as you see. ...Do you think we could close it?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*dry-mouthed*) ...I'm afraid not. It was involved in an... accident...

MANIAC: (*beat, then jovial*) Good man! That was a test! It's part of the crime scene, of course! We must not tamper with it! Good man. Good man. Sorry for the runaround. ...Got

to get up pretty early to do an internal investigation like this one. My name is Judge Malaprop. Come out here from Washington. It's good to meet you, Chief.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(he missed a step, realizing with new terror now)* Aha, you're the Judge?... You're here *already*?...

MANIAC: *I am* the Judge. I'm here, as you say: *already*. *(grinning at the Chief's clear apprehension)*

THE SPORTY CHIEF: I see...

MANIAC: *(ironic aggression)* WHAT do you "see"?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: I see nothing, nothing!

MANIAC: *(ironic aggression)* SEE NOTHING SAY NOTHING!¹³... *(his tone completely changes)* God, look at your face. Come on. I'm only pulling your leg, Chief! I'm just having a little fun here. But... in all seriousness... you weren't supposed to know *when* I was coming. Couldn't risk Captain Bertozzo finding out about my visit and tampering with the evidence. Working on a story. You know. *You see* why we had to take every precaution to make sure Bertozzo didn't know about my coming. *You see*...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(on the ropes for a new reason now)* ...I do see now, I uh, I do see that *now*...

MANIAC: ...My God, Chief...You didn't *tell him*? Did you? Could you *be* that stupid? Don't lie to me now! I can always tell a lie! Like you: I have a tick! *(he discovers a tick)* You see? Just happens *naturally* whenever someone *lies* to me...

OFFICER: *(impressed)* What a great tick!...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(sweating, embarrassed)* Well you see I, I had to get a copy of his *files* from him and so...

MANIAC: *(unbelievable!)* ...He was in possession of his *files*?!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Well, they were *his* so...

MANIAC: And *he*, let's remember, is a *police captain* who is *strongly suspected* of a *pushing a man* out of a *window*, that *window*, in *cold blood*. If he's found guilty, he will be a *murderer*. Now, is it *possible*, that a "man" who'd do that, might also use his authority, as police captain, to cover the whole murder up? This is the person you trusted to hold onto the files concerning this matter?!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(panicked, sputtering)* Yes *exactly*, that's *exactly* why I needed to copy the files! I!...

MANIAC: *(laughs, changes tone)* Gosh, I've *really* caught you off-guard, haven't I? You are *very* surprised!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(getting back on the ball)* I am! I am surprised. Your, your plan to surprise us has worked like a charm!... Now, will you, won't you sit down, please, sit, sit. And let me take your hat. *(takes the hat)* No wait, you said you'd prefer to keep it?

¹³ Could be, "I thought," "What did you think," "What right do I have to think, right." (Casablanca)
 Could be "NOTHING WILL COME OF NOTHING, SPEAK AGAIN!" (Lear)
 Could be "NOTHING? NOTHING? Nothing, tra la la?" (Labyrinth)

MANIAC: You can take it, you can keep it. It's not even mine.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: What?

MANIAC: What?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Would you like me to close the window then?

MANIAC: *(fogs his glasses to clean them)* ...Crime scene...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(mortified)* Crime scene! Oh! I'm all mixed up. I'm never like this!...

MANIAC: Ha!... You tough cops are all such nervous nellyes... Chief, please don't make yourself uncomfortable. Why don't you just go find Captain Bertozzo and bring him in here. Let's get to the main story line.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Of course. But would you maybe like to come with me and meet in his office instead? It will be less draughty in there.

MANIAC: That's thoughtful of you, but *this* is the room where the death of the antifascist happened. Have I got that right?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(uncomfortable)* Yes, that's right... it happened here.

MANIAC: *(he opens his arms wide)* Then Chief, we shall play our scene in here.

(The Maniac takes many documents and spreads them on the table. He also takes out, from a huge bag somewhere conveniently located, an assortment of props he will want, a magnifying glass, a judge's gavel, a stapler, some heavy law books, and whatever else may be necessary. Meanwhile, The Sporty Chief is talking quietly with the Officer just outside the door.)

MANIAC: (cont.) I would prefer, Chief, that you always speak loudly and clearly when you're in my presence! And with good enunciation.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(turning, apologetic)* I'm sorry.

MANIAC: Try it again.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(to the Officer, loudly, clearly, and with good enunciation)* Please escort Captain Bertozzo to my office right away.

MANIAC: Once more, with more urgency. Give that officer a reason to MOVE. Again!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(with great urgency)* I want to see the Captain *urgently!* Bring him here to me now, it is *urgent!*

OFFICER: *(going urgently)* Yes, sir!

(The Sporty Chief turns with a sense of achievement back to the Maniac, but the Maniac has already moved on. The Chief watches the Maniac as he finishes sorting his paperwork and continues to decorate with some detail, including changing the president's portrait for his own, etc.)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(at length breaks the silence)* I wonder what could be keeping the Captain...

MANIAC: You don't mind if I make myself at home?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: No. Of course not.

MANIAC: ...Mind if I *ask* you something, Chief?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Please. Be my guest.

MANIAC: Thanks. That Captain Bertozzo... you did say, that he's had access to *all* of these documents, didn't you. *All* the records into his own investigation?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Yes. ...The *archives* are here in this building, so...

MANIAC: (*peremptory*) Yes, I'm not asking about your filing storage system, I suppose my question *really* is, would he *fiddle* with these *files*, do you think? Given the chance? Omit things? *Rewrite* things?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Honestly? I couldn't say. ...If he's guilty, I think he would, yes.

MANIAC: Because if he was innocent...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: There would be no need.

(*Captain Bertozzo, with a bruised eye, enters as if he'd been catapulted; he's followed close by the Officer*)

CAPTAIN: Alright, I'm here! My God, this officer was *urgent*!

(*The Maniac has pretended to drop some paperwork and is crouching now under the desk*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Captain, let me introduce you to...

CAPTAIN: (cont.) I thought that he must have been joking, 'the Chief wants to see you urgently' he said. Wants to see me? For why? Are you full of remorse of shame now? Does it feel like a punch in the face? You dick...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Not another word, Captain Bertozzo! We must *both* be on our *best* behavior now. I must introduce you to... (*he turns now and sees no one; he is perplexed.*)

CAPTAIN: ...Introduce me to who? Is this some kind of an act? What, are we five years old now? Be on our best behavior? Come on... I have to watch my mouth *everywhere* I go these days, the press are *everywhere*—The press aren't *here*, are they? Are they *hiding* in here?! Look out! (*he looks for press*) Is this some kind of sacrifice, you *pig*... some kind of a *set-up*?!

MANIAC: (*appears behind the Captain*) Yes, it is a kind of a set-up. If you will... But I am *not* the press, Captain Bertozzo.

CAPTAIN: ...My god it's *you*... (*beat, then paling*) You must be the Judge...

MANIAC: (*privately amused*) Yes, I must be. ...But no need to stand on formality. "Judge" sounds so formal. So judgey, in fact. Just call me "Your Excellency."

CAPTAIN: ...As you wish, yes of course, Your Excellency.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Captain Bertozzo, *ahem*, you would have had *no way of knowing*, because you *never heard about this matter until now*, but His Excellency has come here from Washington to conduct another inquiry into the death of the antifascist, and possibly reverse the recommendation for your dismissal!

MANIAC: Possibly.

CAPTAIN: (*playing along nervously*) Aha-ha! Of course! I had no way of knowing about this! This is the first I've heard anything about a Judge coming here. News to me... To possibly reverse the recommendation you say?

MANIAC: Possibly. I am sorry to surprise you like this, dear Captain Bertozzo. Please, don't hold it against your Chief, here. He was only following the regulations for internal matters like these. Weren't you.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Sure I was.

MANIAC: Sure he was. You can tell just by looking in this man's face, he's a man who lays his cards on the table. A man of honor. A man of his word. Oh yes, he's a dying breed...

CAPTAIN: ... A dying breed...

MANIAC: (*beat. to the Captain*) Look, I'm sorry to stare, but you look so familiar... I feel like we must have met before... I feel like I put you away once, for assault. I didn't, did I?

CAPTAIN: (*stammers*) I? I-I.

MANIAC: Never mind. What am I saying. How could you, if you were *known* to be *criminally violent*, how could you ever hold *your* position. Silly of me. Shall we get down to business?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Yes, to business!

CAPTAIN: To business. (*he almost falls into a chair, shaken.*)

MANIAC: To business. Yes. (*selecting certain documents*) Here are the facts as I understand them thus far. *In the first place*, you were holding a male dancer for questioning regarding his suspected involvement in domestic terrorist activities... And according to one of your sworn statements, you said and I quote, "I had a great deal of evidence linking that male dancer to the organization known as Antifa." Is that what you said?

CAPTAIN: That's what I said.

MANIAC: So where is the evidence?

CAPTAIN: Where is the evidence?

MANIAC: That's what I said.

CAPTAIN: Well, in the first place...

MANIAC: We are *in the first place*...

CAPTAIN: The evidence—isn't it in there? (*the papers*)

MANIAC: No it isn't. God, you're terrible at this! (*helping*) ...Is it possible that the antifascist stole the evidence?

CAPTAIN: That's *exactly* what happened! He *stole* the evidence!

MANIAC: Of course he did... Because the evidence against him was so absolute that he knew he didn't stand a chance. He was desperate. Suicidal.

CAPTAIN: It's like you were there in the room.

MANIAC: I wasn't though. (*to The Sporty Chief*) You were though, weren't you, Chief?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: I was there for the *beginning*...

MANIAC: Then you play the antifascist.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: What?

MANIAC: We need to reenact the scene. Make sure we've got our story "right." (*nudges*) Get it?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Got it.

MANIAC: Good. Sit in this chair. ...This *is* the chair used by the antifascist?

CAPTAIN: The very same.

MANIAC: Good. Now begin, Captain! Bring your great amount of evidence against him!

CAPTAIN: *(to The Sporty Chief, tentatively)* We know you go to the No Kings rallies.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(as the antifascist, politely incredulous)* ...So?

CAPTAIN: We know you're a member of Antifa!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(as the antifascist, amused)* Look. I'm not a member of Antifa. No one is, it's not a group. It's an anti-fascist ideology. It's an idea. That fascism is bad. *(he smiles)*

CAPTAIN: A likely story...

MANIAC: *(who has been following along in the transcript)* I like that line, "A likely story" plays into the whole cop trope... Only, it isn't in the transcript.

CAPTAIN: In the transcript?

MANIAC: In the transcript of the actual meeting you had. The dialogue of what was said.

CAPTAIN: ...There's a transcript?

MANIAC: Of course. ...And things you're saying now just *aren't* in here.

CAPTAIN: Isn't it in there?

MANIAC: No. It says here, the suspected antifascist was *incredulous* about the charges. It says here he actually smiled at them. That he was in no way wild or abusive, or anything other than merely polite and bemused... You're doing very well, Chief.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Thank you.

MANIAC: Thank you. But Captain, you, are very bad at this. You're completely off your lines. I think the Officer had better give it a go.

CAPTAIN: *(a little discouraged and confused)* ...I don't think I fully understood what we were doing here.

MANIAC: *(to us)* Ain't that the truth. *(to the Officer)* You be the Captain now.

OFFICER: *(doing the Captain, to the Chief as antifascist)* Aha! Smile at me again, I dare you...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(breaks character, to Maniac)* I'm sorry, what did the antifascist say then?... That last line there threw me.

MANIAC: It says here, "the antifascist did not seem touched by this outburst, but smiled incredulously, and laughed again."

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Thank you so much. *(to the Officer)* Can we take that again, please?

OFFICER: Of course. *(as the Captain)* Aha! Smile at me again, I dare you...

(The Sporty Chief smiles incredulously and laughs as the antifascist)

MANIAC: Bravo, Chief!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Thank you!

MANIAC: Brave to you too, Officer. Now, *how* did we get from here.... to the *next* beat... From smiling incredulously and laughing... to suicidally throwing himself out the window... in possession of all of the evidence against him...which was never recovered... The transcripts don't seem to say what happened in between the laughing and the dying. It seems void in this transcript, void like the open window there...

CAPTAIN: It just sort of...happened.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Yes, that's just how it happened...

MANIAC: Well, I don't believe it. *(to us)* None of us believe it. *(to them)* Don't play coy, boys... Tell us what *really* happened!

CAPTAIN: Ah...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Ah...

CAPTAIN: Ah...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Ah...

MANIAC: *I'll* tell you what really happened! It's obvious, of course! *(will he point the finger at the Captain?... No,)* ...It was a clear case of excited delirium!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(relieved)* Of course...

MANIAC: Excited delirium. Happens all the time, to all kinds of people... especially poor and politically powerless people!... And when excited delirium takes one of them over, police officers like yourselves have every right, nay, obligation, to restrain, to abuse, and even to mmmurder them!

(ALL THE POLICE): Thank you, Your Excellency!

MANIAC: Please. ...On the other hand, people *are* catching on to the fact that excited delirium's a made-up condition... They're starting to call it "a widely debunked pseudoscience." I think we'll need something concrete to offer, to show them all how *real*, how *necessary* it still is... So let's get to the backstory; see if that helps us. *Why* had you picked up the antifascist? What was he doing at the time?

CAPTAIN: The antifascist was at a protest rally. Against the government. So, they were clearly un-American... Right?

MANIAC: Of *course* you're right. ...As long as we forget the fact that it's a hallmark of what makes this great country great: the right of the citizens to peacefully protest the government for redress, so that their voice might be heard. ...But perhaps this protest wasn't peaceful? Was it violent? Were there riots? Were there cars on fire? That's when you know things are serious. When things are on fire.

CAPTAIN: Not yet. Not yet. But it was only a matter of time.

MANIAC: Mm. Was the antifascist in question behaving badly at the time?

CAPTAIN: Well, he was dancing.

MANIAC: How dare he. Dancing in the *streets*? Laughing, singing, music swinging, dancing in the streets? ...What fresh hell is this?

CAPTAIN: What fresh hell is right.

MANIAC: What was the dance like?

(they think)

OFFICER: ...I'd say 'satirical'?

MANIAC: —Satirical. You've interested me.

CAPTAIN: He was dancing to the YMCA.

OFFICER: Parodying how the president dances. *(he laughs to remember it, then)* It was disrespectful to the office of the president.

MANIAC: Of course it was disrespectful. It should be a *federal crime* to satirize the president! If I ever make it to the Supreme Court, I will make it so! Show me the video of that antifascist's dance; this whole case will be open and shut.

CAPTAIN: ...Show you the video?

MANIAC: Yes, show me. ...Surely you and your officers were all wearing body cameras, weren't you? As you made your way through the violent fray of satirical dancing... surely you were wearing body cameras... as you took those criminally offensive dancers from off the streets?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Of course, *all* of our officers *always* wear their body cameras, as mandated by a court order. ...It's just that none of the cameras were turned on at the time.

MANIAC: —DAMN! Damn. We were almost in the clear on this thing... But look, never fear! (*as if addressing a rally*) Throughout the history of this great country, oppressors have always struggled to maintain control... And they've been dealt some hard blows in the name of freedom, equality, and justice... But every time the oppressors have really put their minds to it, they have *always* found a way to keep... at least a foot in the door of this great nation. Or at least, a finger getting repeatedly slammed in the door of this great nation. But we'll never take our finger away, no matter the pain, no matter the cost, we will never go away! There will always be oppressors in this great nation! ...It wasn't easy for the slaveholders when slavery was outlawed, was it? No. It wasn't easy for landowners to rig the systems for themselves when ordinary people, and even women, got the vote. It wasn't easy for public officials of all kinds as laws were passed requiring greater transparency, including *damn* FOIA requests...But we're still here, despite it all! Because we have a *right* to be here! We have a *right*, to maintain our oppressive attitudes! We have to fight the good fight, for our God-given rights, to lie and exploit and oppress! ...It's just OUR TURN now, boys! ...We get the opportunity to cover this one up, so let's... *get...* to it!

(*All the police cheer, woot, whistle, and applaud; inspired by this rally speech.*)

CAPTAIN: (*adding on with a swagger*) I "got to it" when I was talking to that antifascist.

MANIAC: I bet you did. What did you do? (*mock judgment*) *What did you do?*...

CAPTAIN: (*laughs*) Well, I told him we had captured one of his friends, and his friend had given him up! That we had absolute proof about his terrorist activities (*he smiles*) I really tried to scare him. Tried to get him to give *something* up! Put the screws to him, you know?

MANIAC: Aha, entrapment! The use of threats, fraud, or harassment to induce or coerce someone to do or say something they wouldn't ordinarily say or do. ...I love it, of course. *Only*, it doesn't say that you said that in here...

CAPTAIN: Let me see your copy of the transcript? Aha, you know, I think you've got the "first draft" there. I think there may be some later "rewrites" coming—in an effort to "fairly and accurately" portray the events as they "actually happened." Ha ha ha ha.

(*The Sporty Captain and the Maniac share a brief look: he WOULD fiddle with the files.*)

MANIAC: (*as if the look hadn't happened, to the Captain*) Ha ha ha ha. Very good! Lots of air quotes. Nothing suspicious at all about that. So let's hear the rewritten version which we're told is "more accurate." Start at the top please, whenever you're ready.

CAPTAIN: I'll come in through the door and begin.

MANIAC: Very good.

CAPTAIN: (*goes out the door, beat, he comes back in*) "Bad news for you, antifascist..."

MANIAC: —Let me just stop you there. Where are you looking? Who are you talking to?

CAPTAIN: I'm talking to the antifascist.

MANIAC: I don't know who you're talking to. Are you watching the audience watch you?

CAPTAIN: Sorry. Sorry.

MANIAC: (*looks at the audience, thumbing at the cops*) Amateurs. (*to the Captain*) Look, I'll be the antifascist. I'm in the chair now. You're going to give me some "bad news" about how you definitely know I'm a terrorist now; it's going to be a lie; but *I need you to make me believe you. Again!*

CAPTAIN: (*goes out the door, beat, he comes back in*) Bad news for you, antifascist! Your friends have given you up! We have sworn statements now that confirm you are a domestic terrorist!

MANIAC: That's better; I believe you. I believe you. I believe... you took an innocent person off the streets because they were exercising their first-amendment right to peacefully protest the government. I believe you tried to entrap them. Detained them illegally. ...I *even* believe in the debunked "excited delirium" now because: what upstanding citizen wouldn't go *crazy*, wouldn't go MANIACAL, being treated like *this*? ...By an authority figure who has "sworn" to protect them? Who wouldn't become indignant, who wouldn't become desperate and angry enough to *possibly* even throw themselves out of a window! Out of the police's fourth story window in a final act of *protest?!... I BELIEVE: you're responsible for that antifascist's death, whether or not you pushed him out of that window!*

CAPTAIN: What?? But...but, you said, before, that we were within our God-given rights to oppress and?...

MANIAC: Are you kidding me? You don't have ANY EVIDENCE against the person you detained! You just took them off the street, abducted them!

CAPTAIN: But...but, you said 'we get the opportunity to cover this up,' and we all cheered!.. and, and... (*collapsing back into the chair*)

MANIAC: (...*relenting*) ...No, no, you're right. I *did* say that. And, I meant it. But it's not going to be easy... Christ... For a while there, there was a "witch hunting" climate in the press, and that would lend a case like this *some* deniability. 'We're being vilified for no reason, the Democrats, etcetera.' Some people might have believed us then. But right now, all the people are out for *real justice*! For *holding power accountable*! So this is *not* going to be easy! I mean, look at these news reports... You're quoted as saying, at one point, you, Captain Bertozzo, said: "the antifascist was probably just a nice kid that got mixed up with some of

those screwballs who wear Guy Fawkes masks and capes made out of towels.” Did you say that?

CAPTAIN: I did say that... I shouldn't have said that... I-I forgot that I was being recorded... I made a mistake.

MANIAC: (*fatherly*) We all make mistakes. ...This is just a *really big one*. Here, this *other* news report says, that you said, “we have *incontrovertible evidence* against the antifascist.” And then you went on, in some detail, about the various politicians they'd voted for in the past, and the various organizations they'd given money to. Various associations they'd been associated with... A Union member, good heavens... Now, my question for you is: ...Where'd you get all of this information you mentioned in this report? It isn't documented here in all these papers. May I see it?

CAPTAIN: Well, no.

MANIAC: (*eyes the Captain incredulously*) ...No?

CAPTAIN: See... I just made it all up.

MANIAC: ...You just made it all up. Wow. ...You could be a writer! And you *may* need a new career soon...

CAPTAIN: You mean, that I may be dismissed?!

MANIAC: I mean: the reason I came out here is to pass judgment upon you. I mean: it's my job to make a decision here... which will affect all of you for the rest of your lives.

(*a horror sets in.*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*points a finger at the Captain*) Listen, Your Excellency, listen, look. It was all his fault! Just throw the book at him and let's be done!

MANIAC: (*they're wearing him thin...*) “Throw the book” is cliché. Say that same thought in a different way.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Throw him under the bus?

MANIAC: There's just so much “throwing”...

OFFICER: Too much throwing?

MANIAC: (*to us, unimpressed*) I think so. Yes.

CAPTAIN: Lookit, listen, you can't throw anything at *me*! I'm a cop, a hero!

OFFICER: Well, it wasn't *my* fault. I was just following orders!

CAPTAIN: That's right, pass the buck up! You...pig!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: You're both out of here! I can't be seen condoning behavior like yours.

CAPTAIN: Don't you dare scapegoat me! You know what will happen to me and my life? I'll get threats, I'll get trolled, I'll be a joke to everyone in uniform!...

MANIAC: Yes. You may even get bullied and beaten in the streets!...

OFFICER: You may even get killed.

CAPTAIN: Don't say that! Don't say that! I can't let this happen! What should I do? Tell me, I'll do anything! What should I do?!?!

MANIAC: You want *my* advice?

CAPTAIN: Desperately, yes!

MANIAC: Throw yourself out of the window.

CAPTAIN: —How will *that* help anything??

MANIAC: ...It *won't* help anything, you're right. How about this, then. We'll martyr you. We'll make people think better of you in your death. We'll *blot* this *whole incident* from the world's memory; all the world will remember is the *blot* of you on the street... You just have to be sacrificed, that's all. I'll help you. I'll push you. Come on.

CAPTAIN: Don't push me out of the window!!

MANIAC: This is for our own good.

CAPTAIN: No! No! Help! Help!

(*the Maniac almost has the Captain 'dead to rights,' but stops, grimaces and laughs to himself.*)

MANIAC: Pretty frightening, wasn't it. Look all the way down there. Look how far you would have fallen...

CAPTAIN: ...You know for a second there, I-I almost jumped?...

MANIAC: For a second there, I almost let you. But you know... I had to stop because... this isn't really your fault.

OFFICER: ...Isn't it?

MANIAC: "Isn't it, Your Excellency."

OFFICER: Isn't it, Your Excellency?

MANIAC: Isn't it what?

OFFICER: ...Isn't it his fault?

MANIAC: Isn't *what who's* fault. This is terrible *improv*. Give me something to work with here.

OFFICER: Isn't it the Captain's fault that the antifascist is dead, whether or not he jumped?

MANIAC: Yes, AND... It's those bastards in Washington, too... They thrive in a climate of social disorder, because: whenever the people have united, the people have ruled. The only chance for authoritarianism is to divide the people. Make them distrust each other, suspect each other, fear each other. Fear is the best. Fear lasts the longest. And then, to deflect all the fear-mongering away from themselves, they put *all the blame* for *all that fear* on some group of people who they've deemed defenseless. Poor people, "other" people, Jews, blacks, gays, 'undocumented immigrants,' transsexuals... Because what are *they* going to do about it. Right? How are they supposed to defend themselves from these kinds of invisible, amorphous attacks? *And, real attacks!* The *president himself* has given *orders* to people like *you*: to go out and shoot people like *them* in the legs. Unprovoked. Now, that's clearly an unlawful order, 'go and shoot a bunch of people in the legs.' But, people like *you* are *meant* to follow orders, and to *presume* that the orders are lawful. *You* are put in an untenable position. All of *you*... *You* were just doing your jobs. *You* did *absolutely right*. That's why I'm *really* here.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*a glimmer of hope*) What?

OFFICER: What?

CAPTAIN: What?

MANIAC: Of course! Think about it!... it only makes sense! ...You're the apple of an authoritarian's eye! They *love* you guys in Washington D.C.! You spread the seeds of confusion, anger, and *fear*... everywhere you go! You're *artists* of senseless abuse! Modern-day Marquis de Sades! Of course I'm here to help you out of this... The trouble is, all these tall tales... You've got contradicting statements, unsupported statements... I mean, you've really dug a hole for yourself when you were trying to bury the story! But I *think* we can still *possibly* get this sorted...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: I'm *sure* we can still get this sorted!

MANIAC: Possibly.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Thank you, Your Excellency! Thank the judge, boys.

CAPTAIN AND OFFICER: Thank you, thank you! Thank you!

(*The Maniac waves his hand dismissively and looks back out the window.*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: So, which version of the story do you think we go with, Your Excellency? Do we say the *original* story was true, or a "rewritten for greater accuracy" version?...

MANIAC: (*returns, thinks*) Well... I *think* we should ditch the "excited delirium" version. (*ad lib in agreement and disagreement*)

MANIAC: (cont.) No, I know I led us that way at one point, but that's why this is a process; I've made up my mind; we're *not* going with the excited delirium version. It just seems too convenient. Too much like an easy out. No, I think it's much *stronger* to say that this *jerk*, this *antifascist*, this *cold-blooded domestic terrorist*, *threw himself out of the window*... to protect the Antifa underground, and all their ongoing subversive activities! And!...He did it to give the finger to the cops, and!... Raise awareness about his terrorist, "anti-fascist" cause! (*that's very good, excellent! ad lib*)

MANIAC: (cont.) Thank you. Now, if that's *why* he did it, you boys would all be innocent. Right? You'd have been *right* to bring him in; he was a terrorist. You would even have been *brave* to bring him in; this dangerous and radicalized male dancer!...*Right?*

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Right!

OFFICER: Right!

CAPTAIN: Right!

MANIAC: There's just one thing... Why couldn't you *stop* him from throwing himself out the window? Why couldn't you *thwart* this radicalized act? ...How do we explain *that*?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Ah...What do you mean? It... just happened, just all of a sudden!...

MANIAC: (*sighs wearily, looks to the heavens, then*) There is verifiable information that we have to work *within*. There is a reality *we need to get people to buy* that exists *within*... *actual reality*. For instance. Here is the chair. The antifascist sat in this chair. There is the window. We know these things. There is the desk, you must have sat there. You, officer, bet you were there. And you, you were somewhere here, too. That's a lot of police. And a fair bit of furniture. And I think, if the antifascist did indeed jump, he would need to get a running

start to make it out of that window. So, how did he manage to get by *all of you, and the furniture, and?*... (*he whistles the fall*)

CAPTAIN: (*hazards*) He *was* very athletic...

MANIAC: Yes that's true. He *was* a dancer. But take for instance, *another fact* that we need to account for. *The antifascist smiled and laughed. And then... took his own life...athletically?*...

Seems maybe... incongruous? Implausible, maybe? I mean, maybe, *maybe* he was *sociopathic*... to smile, laugh, and then... Maybe... but... being sociopathic is something the press could fact-check! And we don't want them looking *more* into this, so let's not hand them that... Nothing too specific... (*thinks aloud*) ...The antifascist *smiled and laughed*... and then threw himself out of the window because... Why... Why...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Well... (*making it up on the spot*) You know what some terrorists are like!... Never happier than when they're about to strike!... He'd made up his mind what he was going to do; *that's why* he smiled and laughed?...

MANIAC: ...That's *very good*! He'd been taken; knew the jig was up... He wanted to protect all his thug brothers and sisters who are... *anti fascist*... He wanted to give the finger to the police and raise awareness for his cause. He had an idea, and it made him smile and laugh, "yes," the male dancer thought, "YES, I will throw myself out of the window!" He smiled and he laughed and he did!

CHIEF: It's a flawless argument!

MANIAC: Yes, but still, *why* couldn't any of you *stop him*... With so many cops in the room... That's not a good look, is it?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: No.

OFFICER: No.

CAPTAIN: No.

MANIAC: No... Hmm... Hmm...

OFFICER: I must have looked away just for a moment! Getting a piece of chewing gum.

MANIAC: Good! That could work. And what about you two?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: I wasn't there.

MANIAC: No, I'm afraid that's verifiable. You were there. You have to be there.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: I was there.

CAPTAIN: I think maybe he was only there in the first version, before the rewritten versions?...

MANIAC: No, he's there in all the versions, so he's in our version, too. And he... (*thinking on the spot*) he was concerned. I mean, just look at him, in his turtleneck sweater... Of course this man of *deep thoughts* was concerned... about... Concerned... about the nature of the antifascist. Concerned about the state of America. He was thinking *profoundly*... Contemplating, what was best to be *done*. And he... he wanted to do some *real good*. To take a *real stand* for good. Right?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*in character, appropriately moved*) You're God damned right.

MANIAC: So there you are, contemplating this antifascist, this threat to human lives and human rights... and he's sitting there smiling and laughing... and then... and then... Aha! How *indignant* you became when he started to *sing*!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*he missed a beat*) —Sing?

MANIAC: Yes, sing! He started to sing the song the Nazis sing in Casablanca: Die Wacht am Rhein¹⁴ the song is called, "The Watch on the Rhein."

CAPTAIN: But why would he sing that?

MANIAC: It was SATIRE! Antifa's always weaponizing satire... You said it yourselves, he was parodying the president's dancing *even as you picked him up*. Well, here he goes again, using anti-authoritarian satire to playfully comment on challenging subjects... Singing the Nazi song from Casablanca, he was implying that *you* were the fascists, you see... Tsk. And you! There you are in your turtleneck, a clean cut, deep thinking kind of guy, contemplating this... *satirical singing*... It makes you *sick*. You feel *compelled* to *rebel* with a peaceful protest of your own *against the antifascist*!... So you sing your own song over his—La Marseillaise¹⁵, which the French sing over the Germans in Casablanca... in Rick's Café American! ...And you both joined the Chief! Didn't you? Yes! Everybody comes to Rick's! Inspired!! Now, let's reenact the scene! I'll be the antifascist singing Die Wacht am Rhein, and you drown out my singing with your singing La Marseillaise. Let's go.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...I don't sing.

MANIAC: ...You'll sing or this story will *never* hold up! You'll go down in history as a bunch of bull-shitters! But more importantly, and more immediately, you will simply GO DOWN.

(*The Maniac takes his place beside the antifascist's chair and nods with great authority to the booth; a piano accompaniment starts for the German anthem; the Maniac begins to sing Die Wacht am Rhein, as the antifascist. The Chief takes a deep breath and begins to belt La Marseillaise, joined by the Captain and the Officer. Horns come to accompany them. They become so caught up in the song, they genuinely do not notice as the Maniac makes his way from the antifascist's chair to the window. He leans on it, admiring them with some cynicism, a bit like Captain Renault as he leans against the bar at Rick's; the Maniac picks up a coup glass from somewhere outside and under the window. As the singing ends, the Maniac raises his glass, with real emotion.*)

MANIAC: Vive la France!

(*Lights out.*)

The End of Act One.

¹⁴ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Die_Wacht_am_Rhein (Basically translates, 'fuck off, Frenchies, long live the Rhineland, may our young men murder all our enemies; you can rest easy; they defend the Rhein.')

¹⁵ <https://www.thoughtco.com/la-marseillaise-frances-national-anthem-4080565> (Basically translates, 'if anyone tries to oppress or enslave us, their blood will water our grapes; we are united; let's go.')

ACT TWO, SCENE ONE.

(Lights up, they are all as before, coup glass raised in the Maniac's hand...)

MANIAC: And *that's* how he managed to evade *all* of the friendly police in this room and maliciously jump to his death, out of this window! Well, boys. I think I speak for all upstanding citizens of the world when I say how glad and relieved I am... Anyone who has ever worried about the shouts they've heard from police officers... they can rest easy now knowing those shouts... are shouts of song!... And the bangs they hear are police just banging time!... Police aren't out on the streets shooting tear grenades at pastors... they're tearing up at patriotic tunes!... *...To America. (he drink to the cops)*

(cheers around 'to America, to America')

(The Maniac throws the coup glass out of the window.)

A VOICE: *(down on the street, below the window)* Hey! You at the window! ...Stop throwing things out of that window!!

MANIAC: *(calls out the window)* Hey! You on the street! No one throws things out of these windows here. Anything that comes out of these windows: jumped.

A VOICE: You expect me to believe this coup glass just jumped?

MANIAC: *(calls down)* I don't give a damn what you believe. *(to the cops)* I give a damn what we can get away with. *(throws a bottle to the street, turns and smiles)* To that end, concerning the death of the antifascist... are we all happy with the Casablanca ending? Because personally, I think it's great. It's got everything.

OFFICER: You know, I just saw Casablanca for the first time recently!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: No.

OFFICER: I know. I loved it.

CAPTAIN: Casablanca is the best studio film ever made.

MANIAC: Good, good, good, good, good. We're all happy with it. Then let's move on! Let's *advance!* Always be *advancing!*

CAPTAIN: Wait. Did you mean, are we happy with the Casablanca ending for *our* story?

MANIAC: Yes, of course!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: What did you think we were talking about?

CAPTAIN: I thought we were just talking about the ending of Casablanca.

OFFICER: *(as Rick)* You better hurry. You'll miss that plane.

MANIAC: *(to the Captain)* What are you talking about? You don't want to go along with us on the Casablanca story? It's a great story!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *(from Casablanca)* Your papers, please...

CAPTAIN: I just don't think the singing story's going to hold up!...

MANIAC: Are you kidding me? People are going to love it! It has everything!

CAPTAIN: I'd just be more comfortable saying that, you know, we were just horsing around and he fell out of the window. An accident. Plain and simple.

MANIAC: If the press shows up and you're not with us on this, you'll regret it. Maybe not today. Maybe not tomorrow. But soon, and for the rest of your life.

OFFICER: (*helpfully*) ...I could maybe imagine that we were just horsing around.

MANIAC: Don't you start.

OFFICER: But... if we were horsing around with the antifascist... and that's why he accidentally fell... that would have to put us in... quite close proximity to him, wouldn't it? Why couldn't we *grab* him as he fell... if we were already *grabbing* at him?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*proud*) You'll make a good detective! Poking holes in the story.

MANIAC: (*skeptical*) Yes. But can he plug them. ...Say we entertain this idea of the Captain's, that you were all *horsing around*—may I touch you?

OFFICER: Sure.

MANIAC: (*puts hands on the officer*) Say you're horsing around like this, (*they do a half-speed fight, as if rehearsing; even the laugh is 'marked'...*) ha ha ha horsing around... and we make our way over to the window like this, and then you—whoopsadaisy! Over he goes! (*they pause at the windowsill, still as if rehearsing a fight*) I think he'd have to go out head-first, wouldn't he?

OFFICER: Yes, I think so. Here switch with me? (*they do the same steps again in each other's roles*) Ha ha ha horsing around.. and then... (*they stop at the same spot*). If he fell out from this position... I *think* I could have caught him by the shoe....

MANIAC: (*suddenly alert, spoofing My Fair Lady...*)...What was that?

OFFICER: (*'the rain in Spain stays mainly in the plain'*) ...I *think* I could have caught him by the shoe.

MANIAC: (*sings*) He thinks he could have caught him by the sho-oe! By George, he's got it! By George, he's got it! Don't you see? This is a great development! Because if you caught him by the shoe, that would *prove* that you *didn't push him!* YOU were trying to SAVE him! Don't you see?

(*all very excited! Yes, of course, a stroke of genius!...*)

MANIAC: (*panting with excitement*) ...So where is the shoe??

OFFICER: (*paling*) ...Where is the shoe?

MANIAC: Yes, where is the shoe?? Produce it!

OFFICER: I ah...

MANIAC: I understand your storage is here in the building.

OFFICER: (*stammers*) Well I...

MANIAC: (*roars*) "WELL I, YOUR EXCELLENCY."

(*Officer dissolves in tears*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*interceding*) Your Excellency, I think you're too clever, too smart

MANIAC: Too wise

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Too wise not to realize that there is no shoe. Besides which, there's another hole... in the sole... of this story, as it were. And that is: the body of the antifascist was found on the street wearing *two* shoes.

MANIAC: Mm, yes. And he wasn't a tri-ped... A tri-dexter...

CAPTAIN: But! That doesn't *necessarily* mean that we *didn't* grab *another* shoe...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...A *third* shoe?... For God's sake, man. Where did the other shoe come from??

CAPTAIN: Well, I don't know... Ask the *wise man*!

MANIAC: (*snaps*) WHAT.

OFFICER: (*drying his tears*) I know, sirs! (*the Maniac gives focus, all give focus*) What if... the antifascist had one foot that was smaller than the other foot, much smaller, and so, he always wore a tiny shoe... *inside* of a bigger shoe?

MANIAC: ...To make them look even?

OFFICER: To make them look even.

MANIAC: Well I mean... I *like the imagination of it*... but it just doesn't really sound like a thing that a *person* would do, does it? (That's a good question for actors to ask themselves: would a *person* do that?)

OFFICER: (*takes the note seriously; nods*) Thank you.

MANIAC: You bet.

CAPTAIN: (*suddenly*) *Galoshes!*

ALL: ...What?

CAPTAIN: ...He was wearing *galoshes*! ...And we were all horsing around, and he fell out of the window, and it was an accident, and we tried to save him... by catching him by the galosh! And that's why he was still wearing... two shoes! (*beams*)

OFFICER: ...Why wasn't he still wearing *one galosh*, then, on the street?

CAPTAIN: Because you grabbed them both. Or, after one came off in your hand and he fell, you raced down to the third-floor window, and you caught him by the other galosh

OFFICER: What *as* he fell?

CAPTAIN: As he fell, and then, he fell again, from the third floor, and there you were, holding *two galoshes*, and he was still wearing... *two shoes*.
(*beat.*)

OFFICER: What even *is* a galosh.

CAPTAIN: (*storms*) It's a flawless argument!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*to the Officer*) It's a kind of a rubber overshoe you wear over your shoes to keep your shoes out of the rain.

OFFICER: *That's* a galosh...

MANIAC: Galoshes date back to ancient times; they were originally made of wood. The galoshes of vulcanized rubber, as we know them now, can be attributed to none other than Charles Goodyear, of the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company (a company named for, but not founded by him).

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...How do you know all these things?

MANIAC: I know everything.

OFFICER: ...Well, I don't know, but, I don't *think* that people *wear* galoshes anymore...
(*realizing and sharing*) Hey! I ask you, Your Excellency: ...Would a *person* do that?

MANIAC: (*impressed*) Well remembered, officer!

CAPTAIN: (*getting apoplectic*) Listen! Listen! I'm only going to say it one more time! The antifascist was wearing galoshes, we were horsing around, he accidentally fell out the window, we grabbed him by the galoshes—we tried to *save* him—but he fell, out of his galoshes, to his death.

MANIAC: ...Then... *where are the galoshes?!*

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *There are no galoshes!!*

CAPTAIN: (*throwing a tantrum*) The case is closed!!

MANIAC: NO! NO. ...You are standing in the middle of this case's *second investigation!* I swear to God! (*getting out-of-control angry, scary*) We're all bending over backwards to help you, risking our careers, our safety, our honor! And you... what, you don't want to sing?!

CAPTAIN: (*petulantly*) No! I don't wanna sing!

MANIAC: JESUS CHRIST! (*generally raging!*) It's like you people are so used to living with problems, you don't know what to do after they're solved! The Casablanca ending is perfect! It has everything! People will love it! (*to the Captain*) YOU are the only problem left to solve here! YOU are endangering the mission! YOU are a liability to our PR!! And YOU can *stop* being our problem at *any time!* Get it?!

CAPTAIN: (*swallows*) I got it, I got it, I got it...

MANIAC: Good! (*roars*) So! Places! (*stares at the Captain until the Captain moves to retake his early singing position, then*) We're going to take this, once more, from the top. And you better make it count. Because the press are going to hear about this investigation being reopened, and they're all going to come asking questions... We have got to be... ready. We have got to be... perfect. —And, they can *never know this was rehearsed*. Right? Whatever happens: they must *never know what we're doing right now...RIGHT?! Now.* (*deep breath, centers*) Once more, from the top.

(*They have all taken their early singing positions; Maniac nods authoritatively to the booth; piano accompaniment begins for the German anthem; just before the Maniac starts to sing, the phone rings. They all freeze. The Maniac signals to cut the music. The phone continues to ring.*)

MANIAC: (*to The Sporty Chief*) ...It's your office.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*picks up the phone*) Hello? This is the Chief. ...I see. Just a moment. (*whispers to the Maniac, panicked*) ...It's the main desk downstairs. They say there's a reporter here!...

MANIAC: (*whispers*) Well what do they want?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*to the phone*) Well, what do they want? ...I see. Just a moment. (*whispers to the Captain*) They want to see you, Bertozzo.

CAPTAIN: (*whispers*) Is her name Felicity?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*to the phone*) Is her name Felicity? ...Her name's Marie Felicity.

OFFICER: (*whispers*) That's a lovely name.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*whispers to the Officer*) Yes, pretty. (*to the phone*) No, nothing. Hold on.

MANIAC: (*whispers to the Captain*) What does she want with you?

CAPTAIN: (*whispers*) She asked me for an interview. It's supposed to be now.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*whispers*) You might have mentioned it!... (*whispers to the Maniac*) I suppose we should send her away?...

MANIAC: (*whispers*) Not on my account! We don't need to raise further suspicion. We should let the interview happen as scheduled.

ALL: (*whisper incredulously*) What?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*whispers*) But we're not ready!

MANIAC: (*whispers*) We *have* to be ready. The show must go on! If we had six months to rehearse, we would still want more time. So listen: I'll go *disguise* myself as someone else!

That way, *she* won't know a judge is here from Washington. (She could make a meal out of this.) But don't worry. I'll *still* be with you, boys. Every step of the way!

(*the phone makes noises, loud and frustrated: Hey! Hello? Hello, sir??*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Hello? Who's this? ...Oh, it's the main desk downstairs. We were just talking about you. Look, here's what I want you to do... Hold on. (*whispers to the Maniac*) What do I want him to do??

MANIAC: (*whispers*) Have him send up the reporter!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*whispers*) Are you sure??

MANIAC: (*whispers*) Trust me. I know Marie Felicity. We need to get her on *our* side, boys. We don't want her against us. Do you get it?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Oh, I get it.

MANIAC: I knew you would. ...So tell them to send her up!

(*from the phone: hello??? Sir???*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*to the phone*) Listen, I... What was that? ...You keep a civil tongue in your head. ...Or try me and find out, that's what! Send the journalist up. (*hangs up the phone*) Here we go. God help us all. I wish we'd had more time to rehearse!...

(*The Maniac starts to exit*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (cont.) Wait, you're leaving us?

OFFICER: Please, don't leave us!

MANIAC: I *told* you I wouldn't leave you. I've just got to make a quick change (so to speak).

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Oh, thank you, Your Excellency!

OFFICER: Yes, thanks, Your Excellency!

MANIAC: Sh-SH! Don't call me "Your Excellency"! From now on, call me Timothy Stone, Special Agent in Charge of Intelligence with the FBI.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: But there really *is* a Timothy Stone, Special Agent in Charge of Intelligence with the FBI.

MANIAC: Precisely! If Marie Felicity writes anything about us that we don't like, we can say she made up the whole story, because Timothy Stone was never here, and we can prove

it! We can get Timothy Stone to swear under oath that he was never here! I mean... if I can, I'll even try to get her to *quote* me as Timothy Stone... It'll be a cinch to undermine her credibility and character then! Ha ha ha ha!

(*ad libs, ha ha ha, it's genius, genius!*)

MANIAC: Well, there's a reason I work in *Intelligence* with the FBI, you know.

(*A knock on one door.*)

MANIAC: I was never here.

ACT TWO, SCENE TWO.

(*The Maniac exits the second door, as the Reporter lets herself in the first door. The police all whirl around.*)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: AHA, you must be the reporter!

REPORTER: ...AHA, and you must be the Chief! Hello. Good to meet you at last. I'm Marie Felicity.

OFFICER: (*stepping towards her*) That's a lovely name.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*stepping in front of the officer to greet her*) Hello, hello.

REPORTER: Is... everything alright up here?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Alright? Of course. Why wouldn't we be alright?

OFFICER: (*from behind the Chief*) We're the police, you know. We've got things handled.

REPORTER: Yes. I wasn't *implying* anything. It's just that the man at the front desk seemed to be having some *difficulties* on the phone with you. ...Now that I think about it, there's a phone on the sidewalk out there!... (*seeing*) ...that's identical to the phone on your desk there, Chief. Could it be that the phone on the street was thrown out of one of these windows because—

CAPTAIN: —No, it must have jumped!!

REPORTER: ...because technical problems make me crazy, too. I'd love to throw a phone out of a window someday. Just... free myself of it and let it fall. Must be some feeling.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*offers the phone to throw*) Please: be my guest.

REPORTER: No thanks. I wouldn't want to hurt somebody *accidentally*.

(*The Sporty Chief is unnerved for a beat. A knock on the second door.*)

MANIAC: Knock knock knock! Who's in here? (*the Maniac enters with a moustache, a patch eye, and a leather work glove on his right hand. He beams at the Reporter and introduces himself, shaking hands*) Madam. You must be Marie Felicity. Forgive the hand. It's made of wood. A keepsake from my last campaign.

REPORTER: Oh! Thank you for your service, Mr....

MANIAC: Stone. Timothy Stone. Forgive me for barging in like this; it's just, I heard you'd be here, and I'm a huge fan of your work.

REPORTER: Oh yes?

MANIAC: Oh yes. Oh yes. Very much so. It's so refreshing to see a *real journalist at work* these days. None of that "both sidesism" reporting from you!

REPORTER: No, sir!

MANIAC: No, madam! Have I said that right? "Both sidesism?"

REPORTER: That's right. That's when the press fob off this-side's and that-side's *self-stylings of facts* as the news. Tell "both sides."

MANIAC: Right. You know, I just learned recently that legacy news outlets can't *legally* call what they put out "the news." Legally speaking, they are news "stories." Can that be right?

REPORTER: That's more than right, that's a fact.

MANIAC: But *you* tell the *news*.

REPORTER: That *is* what I *do*.

MANIAC: You get the *facts*, and tell *objective truths*.

REPORTER: ...I'm sorry to stare, it's just... Timonthy Stone... Sounds so familiar... Don't you... do you work for the FBI?

MANIAC: You're right, I do work for the FBI. And it's just as well you didn't recognize me. It's useful to keep a low profile in intelligence, you know? And I stick out enough as it is. Wooden hand, eye patch at all.

REPORTER: I didn't say I didn't recognize you... May I ask what you're doing here in (California)?

MANIAC: (*jokes good-naturedly*) Gathering intelligence! ...There's none in D.C.!

REPORTER: (*laughs*) That's very good. Very funny. (*pointedly*) Do you mind if I quote you?

MANIAC: No, no, not at all. (*as she makes a note, he grins at the cops*)

REPORTER: Thanks. ...Well, it's very nice to meet you, Mr. Stone.

MANIAC: Call me Tim, please. The pleasure's mine. ...Don't let me get in your way. I just heard you'd be coming here to interview Captain Bertozzo... because he's been talking about it *all day*, hasn't he; been really looking forward to it, haven't you, old Berty?

CAPTAIN: Well.

MANIAC: Of course you have, you can't fool me. I work in intelligence you know! Ah-ha-ha. And you can't fool Ms. Felicity any more than you can fool me, because she's a *real investigative journalist*! It's just so thrilling... I wonder... would either of you mind if I stay for your interview here? (*sincerely*) I'd be so happy and honored to watch you work, Ms. Felicity. But if I'd be in the way, please just say.

REPORTER: I don't mind. Do you mind, Captain Bertozzo? I'd understand if you preferred this interview be private...

CAPTAIN: Well.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Of *course* he doesn't mind. He's the most *transparent* man I know.

OFFICER: That's true. You can see right through him!

MANIAC: Yes, AND, we'll read all about your interview soon! So, why don't we *all* stay? Together.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*innocently*) Why not? I have a little time to spare.

REPORTER: ...Well, good that's settled, then. *(to the Captain)* So, shall we *push* on?

MANIAC: *(to the Captain)* Jump in?

CAPTAIN: Well.

REPORTER: I have several questions for you, Captain. Do you mind if I record this?

CAPTAIN: ...Well.

MANIAC: Look how shy he's become all of a sudden! After all that talk, "Marie Felicity's coming" all morning. Good gracious. I think you have another fan here, Ms. Felicity... *(he is watching her, smiling)*

REPORTER: *(smiling back at the Maniac, with curiosity)* You're very kind...

MANIAC: *(to the Captain, smiling)* You don't mind if she records this. Do you, Berty?

CAPTAIN: Well.

MANIAC: *(to the Reporter smiling)* He doesn't mind.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Ah... He *doesn't* mind? Are you *sure*?

MANIAC: Yes.

REPORTER: ...Alright! Then let's *jump* in.

MANIAC: *Push* on!

REPORTER: ...Right. Captain Bertozzo, first question: Why do they call you "the window pain man"?

CAPTAIN: —"The window pain man"?

REPORTER: Pain spelt p-a-i-n.

MANIAC: Aha, it's a *pun*.

REPORTER: Yes, but not a funny one.

MANIAC: No.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: No! This is *serious*. *Who* calls him "the window pain man"?...

MANIAC: Classic Antifa pun...

REPORTER: Several kids who were brought in here for questioning. They had Guy Fawkes masks and towels for capes... Do you remember them, Captain?

CAPTAIN: *(evades)* ...How would you *know* if they'd called me "the window pain man?"

MANIAC: Classic towel cape kid behavior...

REPORTER: They sent me a message. From prison. Those kids were sent to prison the same night that the alleged antifascist fell to his death. I have the message here.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: What does it say?

REPORTER: *(reads)* Captain Bertozzo grabbed me by the neck and slammed me against the window, multiple times. He opened the window and tried to provoke me to jump saying—

CAPTAIN: Let me stop you right there. I remember those kids. They can't be believed. This message is just another example of their *relentless and unprovoked assault* against the police! This is the behavior of all core Antifa member militants!

REPORTER: Captain—

CAPTAIN: —Next, you'll ask if I threw that antifascist male dancer out of a window. *(getting angry)* Do you *really* think these claims sound *credible*??

MANIAC: (*mock anger to deflect from the Captain's real anger*) These claims against the *police* in the form of *puns*?? (*he laughs ahahaha*) This seems like such a bad joke it should be put... *pun-der arrest!*

REPORTER: (*smiles at the unexpected*) You certainly do have a way with words!

MANIAC: I'm just saying, these *anti-fascist bad actors* are always making *quips*. Have you seen some of their signs? Oh...They quip it. Quip it good. So, *could it be*, that the message you've brought here today, from the Guy Fawkes towel cape kids... *could* this message be some *new* form of...*radical Antifa prank*? Some new kind of extremist *joke*?... some new stand against the abuse of police power that's happening right here?

REPORTER: —Are you saying that there is an abuse of police power happening right here?! (*beat.*)

MANIAC: (*slaps his hand to his face*) Oh, my eye! My glass eye! Oh it pinched me terribly! Oh, I'm so sorry! Oh God, it's fallen out now! It's fallen out onto the *floor*! Oh *no*, oh *no*—oh, watch out for my hand!! Watch out for my hand where you're stepping, it's wooden! My hand! ...Pick your feet up one at a time! ...Oh god, oh, my eye! My glass eye! ...Oh, there it is. There we are. There we go... Where were we?

(*The Reporter straightens herself up, and calmly begins again. She, is perhaps disappointed that the Maniac obviously tried to distract her. The Maniac, perhaps feels warmly toward her, because she obviously wasn't distracted by him.*)

REPORTER: Captain Bertozzo, I really only have one big question for you. Please answer with a simple yes or no. It's about the antifascist who, while under questioning by you, somehow fell out of a window. ...For some reason, all the records are missing from the antifascist's forensic files. All the records from his autopsy are gone so we cannot determine if any of his injuries were sustained *before* he fell. And, I have multiple sources, who tell me they call you, "the window *pain* guy." So my direct question to you is, you guessed it: Did you push a man under questioning out of a window? Did you murder the alleged antifascist? (*beat.*)

MANIAC: (*coming to the rescue, incredulous*) —Sorry, did you say *murder*? *Murder*? ...*Murder*? That's what this is all about? But, this is *crazy*!

REPORTER: 'Crazy?' With this evidence?

OFFICER: And lack thereof!

MANIAC: Yes, I think this is crazy! I think this is crazy. ...I mean, I absolutely believe that police brutality exists. Sure. I believe things may get... out of hand sometimes. I can imagine a police officer who's had a *hard* day, who's had a *long* day, who was *tired*... who was getting laughed at, by some kid, in Guy Fawkes mask... I can see... how that police officer... might eventually just (*slaps the air*) just give them a slap! I can see that happening. I'm sure that happens... more than we'd like to admit... and maybe we should spend some time, together, trying help make that...not happen so much. But *murder*? *Murder*? That's impossible. That's CRAZY.

Because *how* could he ever get away with it? How? Because a murderous cop would always be surrounded by police officers at work... Who all uphold the law... And are all good, *highly-trained* policemen. They would doubtlessly discover the bad cop's actions, and take him, *immediately*, off of the streets!... Not just because he's a *murderer*, but because he betrayed the *trust* of the *people*, and he betrayed their *own* trust, as cops... and the people's trust in *them*, as cops... he would have betrayed the *uniform*... he would have betrayed the dignity of his office and all the respect and honor he owes it. The good cops *would* catch the bad cop right away. Of course *they would*. And then we *would* all be living in a safer and more just society!...

That's *what would happen* if a cop ever murdered someone in this country!... let alone if a cop murdered someone for a totally nonsensical reason... like *thinking*: 'fascism is bad, people should be free to enjoy their rights and be proud of their country whoever they are.' CONK! Bang them on the head, you're *dead*. (*getting increasingly angry about it*) The irony is, of course, only a *fascist* would do that. 'Bang on the head, you're dead,' because only a *fascist* would believe that *they* have the *right* to do whatever they want, so no one else should have any *rights* at all! A. That's lunacy. B. That's hypocrisy to an existential degree. And C. It dehumanizes the world. That's fascism. (*mock incredulous*) And here you are, suggesting the *captain* here is a *fascist*? And if he is, that *all* these officers are engaged in the coverup?? That they're all lying right to our faces??? That's what you're suggesting???? Yes. I think this is *crazy*. I think it's *insane*.

(*he stares at the window blankly*)

REPORTER: (*watching the Maniac*) Well. ...I think that's a wide-eyed attitude from someone who works in intelligence...

MANIAC: (*stares at the window still. Then, returning, softening*) No, it's a clear-eyed attitude, madam. Au contraire. But if anyone can convince me, it's you. Go on, and convince me that this kind of evil exists in our midst. And, Ms. Felicity, remember.. it is *you* who will have to convince me. Because surely, if this man is guilty of what you say, he will *adamantly* deny it! Just as if he were innocent. (*to the Captain*) Right? Don't you deny it?

CAPTAIN: Well.

MANIAC: There, you see! He's *outraged* at the mere suggestion, just as if he were innocent! So, Ms. Felicity, can you *convince* me, that this man is guilty of abusing his power to the point of covering up a *murder*? Because I find that pretty hard to believe. (*he crosses his arms and faces the Captain*).

CAPTAIN: ...Are you turning on me?

MANIAC: "Turning on you?" Whatever do you mean? I'm saying *I think* you're innocent.

CAPTAIN: ...It just seems like maybe you're on *her* side now...

MANIAC: I'm on the side of *truth*.

REPORTER: Was he on your side before?

MANIC: (*intercedes to ask the Reporter*) There is such a thing as *objective truth* in this post-post modern world of ours. Isn't there, madam press?

REPORTER: (*pleasantly surprised!*) Yes, I think there is! I think *there are objective truths!* And may I say, it's *hugely refreshing* to hear someone talk about a *need* for a new artistic movement!

MANIAC: Well, I mean, we haven't even *tried* to *define* an artistic movement since *post-modernism!*

REPORTER: (*caught on the subject*) And it's about time we did! Because I think... we *needed* the postmodern era, at the time, to test the boundaries of reality itself... and our relation to it. What I mean by that is, the postmodernist movement said: all truth is realized in a personal way, and therefore, all truth is subjective... and to claim there is anything that's *objectively true* is therefore elitist, and naïve and wrong. ...Speaking for myself (*subjectively*), I'm proud of humanity for exploring such an extreme and dangerous mental position as postmodernism. But the time has come, I think, where the pendulum *is* swinging back, and I think we *should* start saying again... that *we know* at least a *few things* that are *true*. And, we can even base our *actions* on them! ...And even try to discover *more truth!*

MANIAC: (*entirely taken by her*) You know, I ah, hate to be too personal. But you have quite a way with words, yourself. I know you're an independent journalist, of course, but I wonder (*he asks meaningfully*) have you ever been an...actor?

REPORTER: (*she understands at last, the Maniac must be undercover*) Ah, yes! Actually... On the *world stage* as it were. Have you done any...*acting*, yourself?

MANIAC: Oh yes. When the occasion arises... In fact, you could say my real profession, is the *theatre of truth*.

REPORTER: You're rather wonderful, aren't you, Tim...

MANIAC: You're not so bad yourself. Oh pardon, my hand... (*she has held onto his glove; on the Maniac, an empty sleeve remains*)

REPORTER: Oh my, your hand has come off in my hand! I'm terribly sorry.

MANIAC: Never mind, I have another. Look! (*his real hand*) As good as new!

OFFICER: (*amazed!*) It looks so real!

MANIAC: It's amazing what they can do these days.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: It's true.

OFFICER: We live in the future!

MANIAC: Shall we get back to this interview, madam?

REPORTER: Yes, let's shall. Let's see how this *plays* out. (*to the Captain*) Now. Tell us all what happened, in your own words, Captain.

CAPTAIN: ...Alright. Here goes. (*takes a breath, then, a bit 'memorized'*) I had the antifascist in here for questioning...

REPORTER: Sorry to interrupt. Why? Did you bring him in for questioning?

CAPTAIN: Because he was dancing satirically at a protest.

REPORTER: Dancing...satirically?

MANIAC: (*bolstering the argument*) Yes of course. Humor and satire are powerful weapons of Antifa militants...must be curbed at all costs...

REPORTER: I see, of course, yes. So you brought him in on a charge of satire?

CAPTAIN: That's right.

REPORTER: And you were questioning him.

CAPTAIN: Well yes. I questioned him.

REPORTER: Yes? And?

CAPTAIN: And he laughed at me.

REPORTER: Laughed at you?

OFFICER: Smiled and laughed.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Incredulously.

MANIAC: (*to The Sporty Chief*) Show her.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Like this. (*he smiles and laughs incredulously*)

MANIAC: (*to The Sporty Chief*) That's so good. (*to the Reporter*) Isn't that good?

REPORTER: Yes, very good.

MANIAC: (*to the Reporter*) He's a very good actor. (*they share a look*)

REPORTER: (*advancing*) Yes, so this Antifa terrorist is brought in on a charge of satire, and he laughed at you...

OFFICER: Smiled and laughed

REPORTER: Smiled and laughed

MANIAC: Incredulously

THE SPORTY OFFICER: Like this. (*he smiles and laughs incredulously*)

REPORTER: Yes. Then what happened?

CAPTAIN: Well... ..Then we were just sort of horsing around and he fell out the window... but we tried to save him by grabbing him by the galosh. But he fell out of the galoshes to his death. We tried to save him.

REPORTER: ...A galosh? I didn't see that mentioned anywhere. Is it in evidence?

MANIAC: (*gives the officers a look; ...he's got this spin*) Well. I think the real question for you, as a member of the press, is: which party is more associated with the wearing of galoshes? Because it all comes down to *politics* these days, I mean, doesn't it? In the news? Are galoshes more of a Republican or Democratic overshoe... Which camp was this antifascist in, you know? What do the galoshes signify?...

REPORTER: You know, now that I think about it, galoshes may be one of the last remaining vestiges of non-partisan goods... But I would still like to know, where *are* the galoshes?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*agonized*) There are no galoshes!

OFFICER: (*to the Captain*) Sir, if I may, I think you may have gotten a little... mixed up?...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*to the rescue*) Yes, he works so many cases. He works so *hard*.

REPORTER: (*to The Sporty Chief*) Of course. (*to the Officer*) You think there *weren't* galoshes?

OFFICER: Well, as I recall, in this case, one of the antifascist's feet was much smaller than the other so—

(The Sporty Chief gives him a meaningful look: NO.)

OFFICER: (cont.) You know, I don't remember. Sorry.

REPORTER: *(generally)* It's a simple question, I think. Were there, or were there not galoshes?

OFFICER: I don't think we ever decided...

REPORTER: *Decided?!*

MANIAC: *(interceding)* Do you think we could just hear the story again? From the Captain? He'll put us straight...

CAPTAIN: *(defensively)* ...It feels like you two are ganging up on me.

REPORTER: Oh?

CAPTAIN: There oughta be a law...

REPORTER: You oughta know.

CAPTAIN: *(to the officers)* Are these two in league against me??

(MANIAC AND REPORTER): "In league?"

REPORTER: I never even knew that Timothy Stone would be here...

MANIAC: It's just that we both *act* on the behalf of truth and justice. Just like *you*, Captain. For *you must act* upon these values, too. Just think of us, as one of *you*.

REPORTER: Please continue.

CAPTAIN: ...We were uh... well, I'm pretty sure he was wearing galoshes... But we were horsing around, like I said, and he fell. ...It was an accident.

MANIAC: *(sotto to the Reporter, as if consulting behind the director's table)* That's as far as we've got.

REPORTER: I see. ...Could I give just one note and see if it plays?

MANIAC: Please do! *(to the officers)* Listen up, now.

REPORTER: *(takes over directing)* It's just that these *vague memories* you all seem to share...they're coming across to me as a little suspicious. ...They're raising some red flags for me, you know?

(they all hear this, 'mm' 'mm-hm' 'that's fair')

REPORTER: (cont.) *(paints the picture)*...A man falls to his death right in front of your eyes... You run to the window. You see him sprawled on the street. Wouldn't that image be seared in your mind? I mean, wouldn't you remember a thing like that? I just feel like *I* would.

MANIAC: *(agrees)* I think anyone would. Yes, you're right. That's a great observation. Thank you. You know, I'm starting to look at this whole story differently now... In fact I'm starting to ask myself here... Chief... Is this place entirely honest?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Honest? Honest as the day is long!

MANIAC: See, I believe *that*... *(to the Reporter)* I always believe him, no matter how wild the circumstances are, he just always commits. Do you think so, too?

REPORTER: From what I've seen of his work, yes, I do. He's very good.

(*The Sporty Chief is very pleased.*)

MANIAC: So what I'm wondering now is... maybe... Maybe it's just the *way* the story's being told? Maybe it's old Bertie's *tone*? Because... just for instance... would I believe this story *if* he said it *folksier*... (*to the Reporter*) Would you like to hear him do it *folksier*?

REPORTER: Yes! You know... I think I *would* like that, very much...

MANIAC: Alright! Then, take it away, Captain. *Folksy* as you can.

CAPTAIN: (*gathers himself, prepares, then*) Now I ain't sayin' nothin' *bad* happened... That dancer fella just got a little too *rowdy*, that's all. He was makin' fun o' the *President*, which, well, we couldn't just let that *slide*... so we brought him in *real gentle-like*. He laughed, sure, but we was all jokin' around... nobody meant for him to go a-sailin' outer that window... And if anyone tells you different? Like a towel-cape kid? (Real serious witness, am I right?) Well, I say them towel cape kids was never there... 'coz if they was, they'd know how slippery them galoshes can be...

MANIAC: No! ...No, I don't like *that*. I'm not buying *that*. Are you buying any of it?

REPORTER: (*sarcastic*) What do you mean? I'm buying it *all*.

MANIAC: (*sarcastic*) You are?

CAPTAIN...Are you being sarcastic?

REPORTER: (*sarcastic*) Oh noo.

CAPTAIN: Is she being sarcastic??

(*she laughs at the Captain*)

CAPTAIN: (cont.) Don't laugh at me! (*he stands aggressively*)

MANIAC: (*intercedes quickly, pushing the Captain back into the chair, keeping his focus on the...*) Chief, why don't you give it a try? (*to the Reporter*) He's just marvelous. (*sharply turning to the Captain*) SIT. STAY. (*addressing the rest cheerfully*) Chief, Madam, policeman, lend me your ears... Here's my hypothesis, now help me test it... *If any one of us* can get this messaging to "play", the rest of us can just do what *they* do... In other words, we'll just follow the winning messaging out of the woods. We'll be in the clear! Is that good logic, Ms. Felicity?

REPORTER: Well, it seems to be *popular* logic these days... Personally, I think it's a little *obvious*...

MANIAC: Yes, me too. But you know... all those politicians must *keep doing it* for some reason! It must be *fooling someone*! Right? So, Chief, let's have you take the story again, please, from the top, and make it just as *folksy* as you can. ...Be *folksy*... like *your life depends on it*... because it *does*.

(*the chief starts centering himself with great seriousness*)

REPORTER: (*sotto to the Maniac, as The Sporty Chief prepares*) How can anyone ever think of satirizing these kinds of officers...

MANIAC: It's scandalous, isn't it?

REPORTER: Scandalous, yes.

MANIAC: Yes. It's all so *insane*.

(*They look at each other. Beat. He turns from her*)

MANIAC: (cont.) Are you about ready, Chief? Because if you nail this, everyone else can just follow your lead, toe the line, bow the head, such my dick, and go home, in the clear. So tell us what *really* happened, Chief! Tell us...*the truth! And make it folksy.*

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Well shoot, lemme tell ya somethin', friend... There was this fella, some kinda fancy-footed *dancer*, struttin' around like a peacock at the prize county fair.

REPORTER: What's a "prize county fair"?

MANIAC: (to Reporter) It's something folksy, that's for sure.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (cont.) He was at an "I Hate America" rally. And what does he go and do there? Starts makin' fun o' the President of the You-nited States! ...Our *president!*...

Wigglin' and jigglin' to that "YMCA" song like he's got ants in his... dang pants...And his little fists like he's doin devil work... Now, I don't care what side o' the fence you're on... but that kinda carryin' on just don't sit right with me. Ain't proper. Oughta be a *federal offense*, if you ask me, makin' mock of the Commander-in-Chief in front o' God and everybody.

REPORTER: That's *very* good. 'God and everybody's' very good.

MANIAC: (watching her) Very good, yes.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (cont.) These police boys, they done done their duty — hauled that fool dancer right in. And what did he do, but sit there, *smirkin'*... like he's too clever for the room... And then, the real...kicker... is: that rascal had the gall to laugh right in the captain's face! Laugh in the face of a sworn officer of the law?... Well, he musta thought that the law was a *joke*, and he hated his country.

REPORTER: (to the Maniac) I don't love that part in the past tense. It makes me remember his death.

MANIAC: (to The Sporty Chief) Present tense, please?

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*strongo*) He thinks the law is a joke, and he hates his country.

MANIAC: That's MUCH stronger. Yes.

REPORTER: Much better, yes.

MANIAC: (to The Sporty Chief) Keep going in the present tense.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: He laughs at the captain, and the captain, well, he laughs right back, because he's a big, strong man... so the captain's *joshin'* him back, givin' him a little *roughhouse*. Nothin' *mean-spirited*, mind you, just a lesson in *respect*.

MANIAC: Respect.

REPORTER: Respect is good.

MANIAC: Oh yes.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: But wouldn't ya know it?... in the middle o' this horseplay, the suspect up and tumbles out the... dang window!

MANIAC: (*longing*) Folksier?...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*striving to be as folksy as possible!!*) Plumb out the winder! The boys tried ter catchm, blessm! Blessm!... They got erhold uh the dancer's *galosh!*...

(*under and through the Reporter/Maniac*) They can fight us, but they can't fight their own natures... that's the paradox... you see? If we were gone, they'd just find another monster. They have to. To justify their wages.

REPORTER: I just thought... He was *dancing in galoshes*?

MANIAC: (*sotto*) Honestly? We hadn't thought that far!... That's a great point. Put a pin in that.

(*back to The Sporty Chief*) I think that last line was from Red Dead Redemption?

OFFICER: It was Dutch!

MANIAC: Well let's bring it on home, Chief! Folksy, *folksy*! Patriotic!!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*now like a narrator in Our Town*) So that's how it went. You mock the president, you mock the law, and sooner or later the good Lord or the fourth floor's gonna sort you out.

REPORTER: (*eyebrows raised at that closer*)—Mm!

MANIAC: Mm...

(*Beat. The Sporty Officer is crushed by this non-reception.*)

MANIAC: ...No, it's not your performance, Chief. You were *great*. As always.

REPORTER: No, it's the *story*.

MANIAC: It's the *story*.

REPORTER: I just don't buy it...

CAPTAIN: (*exasperated*) Does that need to *matter*?

OFFICER: (*helpfully*) You know... I feel like I remember the story a little differently...

MANIAC: (*interested, he always gives the Officer full focus*) Do you?

OFFICER: Yes I do. I ah, I remember, that ah, (*checking around for support*) after the antifascist smiled and laughed, incredulously, he ah... he started singing The Watch on the Rhein.

REPORTER: (*non-judgmentally surprised*) —He started *singing*.

OFFICER: The song the Germans sing in Casablanca.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Oh yes. ...Yes, of course. I remember that part very well...

MANIAC: (*explaining to the Reporter*) It was satirical singing of course. Anti-authoritarian satire. Classic Antifa.

REPORTER: (*adjusting to this story*) No, of course, it makes *total* sense the antifascist would satirically sing The Watch on the Rhein while under questioning. It's just that I did...*Nazi*...that coming! ...It's a twist on our preconceived expectations for the story!

MANIAC: (*to the Reporter*) It's so good to work with another professional! Yes precisely! That's precisely what we were going for! And then, you see, *after* the antifascist started to satirically sing, *The Chief*...well, you should tell it, Chief, I'm sorry to step on your toes...

THE SPORTY CHIEF: Not at all. (*taking character, masterfully*) I was contemplating the antifascist at the time. The nature of anarchy itself, you understand. The state of this great country of ours. What was to be done... And I felt, at the time, that I wished I could take a real stand, at that moment. A stand for real good. So, when the antifascist started to sing the

Nazi song from Casablanca, I, without even thinking, began to sing—over his singing—I began to sing La Marseille.

OFFICER: And I joined him. And so did the Captain there, too.

THE SPORTY CHIEF: And we became so caught up in the singing

MANIAC: (*painting the picture*) There was even accompaniment, horns...

THE SPORTY OFFICER: We didn't notice the antifascist as he made his way from the chair to the window... and he jumped!

OFFICER: Maliciously jumped.

MANIAC: To protect his anti-fascist brothers and sisters known as Antifa terrorists... and protect their ongoing subversive plots!...

CAPTAIN: Domestic terrorism!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: He jumped to give a finger to the police, which all Antifa hate for *no reason!*

OFFICER: No reason at all!

MANIAC: He jumped to raise awareness for his anti-fascist cause. And that's how the antifascist died.

REPORTER: Wow! I mean wow! ...I wish you had *led* with that version! People will *love* it! It has *everything!* (*sings*) *Le jour de gloire est arrive! Contre nous de la tyrannie. The day of glory has arrived, we oppose all tyranny...*

ALL: Bravo, bravo!

REPORTER: Thanks. (*a bit breathless*) It's a *wonderful* story you've got there. Spun it all so you're real American heroes.

(*Thank you, thank you...*)

MANIAC: (*turning suddenly cold and restless*) Yes. Yes. 'They tell it well... all *raconteurs* tell tales like these in skillful and amusing ways...'

THE SPORTY CHIEF: *Raconteurs?* What's this?

OFFICER: Are you alright, Mr. Stone?

CAPTAIN: Hey, what's going on?

MANIAC: I've had it up to *here!* And when a man has had it up to *here*, that's the time that a man *must* hold his head up *high!* I'll conceal the *truth* no longer! The *truth* of my *real identity*...

OFFICER: Say, what are you doing? THE SPORTY CHIEF: Are you thinking straight, Tim?...)

CAPTAIN: Don't say it!! REPORTER: What is it, Tim??

MANIAC: The truth is... my name's not Tim!! Ms. Felicity, I am not really Timothy Stone! All this time I've really been (*tearing off the eye patch and fake moustache*) Judge Malaprop!!

(*the police officers react with great confusion and despair*)

MANIAC: (cont.) Yes, I am Judge Malaprop from Washington sent to reopen the investigation into the death of that alleged antifascist—and I have been shocked, shocked to find what's going on in this place!

(*police react*)

MANIAC: (cont.) (*tells the Reporter*) All day, I've been with these police officers, acting as if I were just another corrupt public official... To earn their trust. To show them that I was on their side. Make them *believe* that I was one of *them*... But in *truth*, Justice has arrived for them, at last. I told you, you have to get up pretty early to get the *jump* on an internal investigation like this!...

(*all the cops are horrified*)

CAPTAIN: (*snarling*) This is entrapment!! How dare you!? And! It didn't even work!

Despite your *bad acting*...(the Maniac gasps) ...we never told you what *really* happened!

MANIAC: Come on, you don't need to *tell* us! We see through your flimsy excuses! Don't we? (*to the audience*) We've known he did it all along, didn't we? Of course, we've *all* known, *right from the start*!... A question for the dramatic arc of this play!... I think it holds!... AND we want JUSTICE NOW! Don't we? Yes! We all do! So just tell us the truth! You pushed an innocent man out of a window for dancing and laughing at you, didn't you? You *pushed* him right out of that window, right there, for exercising his rights! You murdered him, didn't you? Murdered him, yes?? You pushed him, you pushed him, you pushed him, CONFESS!

CAPTAIN: (*defeated at last*) ...I confess, alright, I confess, I confess!...

MANIAC: (*roars*) WHAT do you confess? And state your name please when you tell us!

CAPTAIN: I, Sue Bertozzo, pushed an innocent man out the window. I told him to jump and he wouldn't... so I pushed him.

OFFICER: (*to The Sporty Chief*) He's a man named Sue!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: (*to the Officer*) That explains it!

MANIAC: (*heard them anyway*) But doesn't excuse it. Tell us more, Sue. Tell us how... after you murdered that innocent man... you used your *authority* as a public official to try to cover it up...to not be held accountable...to be above the laws of the land...which you are very particularly meant to uphold. Say you did it if you did it.

CAPTAIN: (*blankly*) Yes. I did it. Yes, I did.

(*beat of Moment...*)

MANIAC: ...And, cut! (*the Maniac picks up the Reporter's recorder with a smile*) I think that was it; I think we've got it. What do you think?

(*The Reporter reaches for her recorder; the Maniac holds it away*)

MANIAC: (cont.) What shall we *do* with this recorded admission of guilt now? Throw it out of the window? To the people?...

(*all gasp and move for the recorder; the Maniac holds it away... then the Maniac hands the recorder to the Reporter*) This is the truth: you must keep and protect it. Thank God you're a *good* reporter. We need more of you, now more than ever—the things *technology* can do today... And all the major media outlets owned by the richest people in the world... what could *they* have to *hide*... No, we need more *good* independent reporters right now. (*glancing*) And more *good* cops...

...We NEED them.

(having accomplished his mission, he's about to fall apart) ...Which reminds me... I have one last thing for your story, Ms. Felicity. *(he starts taking off the judge's character)* I'm not really Judge Malaprop either. ...Earlier today (at the top of the play) I told these men here that I was a danger to myself. I told them that I was deranged. I showed them my medical record to prove it. And still, they detained me, illegally, against California code 5150. They ridiculed me. ...He told me to throw myself down a stairwell and he watched. *(to the Captain and Officer)* I ASKED FOR YOUR HELP.

And I recorded all of that, too. Everything. *(he produces his own recorder)* I've been recording the whole play. *(to the officers)* You'll hate that this is recorded, right? Because you'll think—rightly—that you should have acted better!! Well, too late! Here it is now! A recording of all this...bad acting. *(hands his recorder to the Reporter as well)* You take this, too. And here's my card. *(a recipe card)*

(he leaps up on the sill, he is lit dashing) Marie Felicity, take this true story to the people. I think it's going to make a real smash as soon as it hits the street. I think I can guarantee it. *(he smiles dashing, he blows a kiss to her, blows a raspberry to the officers, and jumps.)*

REPORTER: No wait! I love you! Whoever you are!

THE SPORTY CHIEF: He was a madman!

OFFICER: He was a genius!

CAPTAIN: *(realizes, gasps)* ...He was the maniac from before?!...

END OF PLAY.

ALT ADDITIONAL ENDING:

...CAPTAIN: *(realizes, gasps)* ...He was the maniac from before?!...

(The phone rings. And rings. ...And rings...)

THE SPORTY CHIEF: ...Hello? What's that?... Who? ...Good Lord... *(he nearly faints, covers the receiver)* It's the real Judge Malaprop... He's here!

END OF PLAY.

Notes from Fo/Rame

This is Fo's best-known and most-popular play

It was seen by an estimated million people in the first four years of its production

It is an hilarious satire on police corruption

It is about, in part, the farcical interventions of various authority figures attempting to explain away that corruption

It is based on a true case (1921, New York—transplanted by Fo to 'today' 1970 'Italy')

And it was inspired by patrons who had requested a theatrical response to the Milan bombings (massacre)

"It was naturally a farce, because such was the grotesqueness of the court proceedings, and the contradictions in official statements" -Fo

The production was aware that the play risked legal proceedings (that charges might be "made" against it)

It was a self-described work of political militancy

The production received phone calls from unnamed callers telling them there was a bomb in the theatre

The 'Flying Squad' intervened

More than one theatre refused to let the play on its premises (a police chief didn't want to lose their job, getting leaned on by someone higher up)

"It became clear that the police, one or two mayors, and others, were in league with the government who were making an effort to prevent certain things being known... well some things absolutely must be known."

The show's success was not just in the way it mocked the hypocrites, and lies, so gross and blatant (to put it mildly)...It's about the hypocrite's crocodile tears for society...

It's about the Indignation the good citizen feels toward this

The Indignation they feel when they feel they're being smothered by the giant frauds, the murders, the massacres, the wars that are undertaken by oppressive powers!

And it's about the satisfaction the citizen feels in finally pointing his finger at them, and his whole society... At the whole fat, bloated thing that tries to relieve itself with a burp—and the burp is a scandal—the thing relieves itself from an uncomfortable position...liberates itself with the very explosions, shocks, shootings, massacres that destroy more good people, family and friends.

It is about the freedom he feels after he has desecrated them to say, "Long live this bastard shit society, because at least it always wipes its ass with pretty, perfumed paper, and when it burps it has the good manners to put its hand over its mouth!"

The play was later renamed Accidental Death of an Antifascist and Other Subversives to make it clear that people were still being taken off the streets without due process; still sitting in prisons with people in authority just hoping they would die; still people who blackmail and beat to death everyone who is not willing to bow their head to the unjust.

"Unlucky for them, they will have to realize there are a lot of us... and this time their burp will get stuck in their throats." -Fo

Notes from Schaar

This version is based closely on Fo/Rame's original , but differs in a few key respects.

- Our anarchist is no longer a union railway man. For our purposes, in a 2025 American version, they are a suspected "Antifa" domestic terrorist
- The bombing in Milan is no longer the suggested cause for suspicion. Instead, there are armed police marching against "I hate America" rallies.
- The charge against the antifascist is no longer the alleged planting of bombs in Milan. Instead, the charge against the antifascist is SATIRE. Because, as we all know (she said ironically) it should be a federal crime to satirize an (authoritarian) president. This also serves to underline the "meta" nature of the play, which is itself a work of anti-authoritarian SATIRE.
- The Maniac no longer blows up the building at the end. Because "Antifa members" are being accused of acts of terrorism, which are baseless, it seemed more in the spirit of Fo/Rame's protest play to not suggest that the Maniac or Antifa are violent. Rest assured, the Maniac still jumps at the end.
- The role of the Reporter has been enlarged to examine, with the Maniac, the way the story the police have concocted with "play" in the news.
- This version is for 5 actors (originally for 6). The Captain remains present for the middle of the play here (as opposed to bookending the play with a 'Superintendent' and the 3rd police voice in the middle). I believe this serves to enhance the already wonderful role of Captain, and to reinforce him as the 'foil' for the Maniac. It is possible, even likely, that the Captain (the murderer) believes he's the only person behaving in a sane manner here...

If I had to summarize this version's relationship to the original, I would say: it begins by interpreting every original line in Fo/Rame's script (working from the Italian), then it respects every original beat, and finally, respects every original question and argument. It's very much *Accidental Death of an Anarchist*, and it's also very much the modern American retelling of these events. Just as Fo retold the real-life 1921 New York incident as it might have played out in 1970 Italy, we take this time capsule of a play another 50 years into the future, back to America. And in all these times and places...the fundamental farce of authoritarianism is the SAME

My understanding from reading a note on the text of the Richard Nelson version, "his [Richard Nelson's] adaption was based on Suzanne Cowan's literal translation, published in *Theatre Magazine* in 1979. For the Arena Stage production and the subsequent Broadway production...Nelson revised the dialogue for the American stage, and added some references to current politics. His adaptation was approved by Dario Fo. Subsequently, Fo asked for further changes in the text... The changes included some new political references and dialogue...These changes were made with the consent of Richard Nelson, who remains credited as the American adaptor of the play."

It is with the understanding that Fo requested ongoing changes to Nelson's script that I feel confident in making my own *judicious* adjustments to the telling of events in this version. "A theatre, a literature, an artistic expression that does not speak for its own time has no relevance." - Fo

"How do I act so well..." -Sir Ian McKellan

