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*To the original cast and crew of The Moustache
for their enthusiasm and creativity in bringing this play to life.*

*To Mr. Brian Cordeiro
for his guidance and advice.*

To my family.

The play's the thing,
Wherein I'll catch the conscience of the king.

—William Shakespeare, *Hamlet*
Act II, Scene II

Cast of Characters

PHIL STEVENSON, the mild-mannered chancellor of Baffiria

LINDA STEVENSON, Phil's intellectual and sarcastic wife

ERNEST LIPTON, Phil's second-in-command, a jovial politician

THE MOUSTACHE, Phil's Machiavellian talking moustache

NARRATOR, a passionate citizen and historical archivist

THE DANCING ELEPHANT, a dancing elephant

In addition to the major players, the show includes an ensemble of approximately 10-15 reporters, townspeople, and various other characters.

Setting

The tiny nation of Baffiria.

Acknowledgments

The Moustache was originally performed on February 2, 2007 in the Dr. Daniel S. Harrop Theater at Bishop Hendricken High School in Warwick, Rhode Island as part of the New Artist Play Festival with the following cast and staff:

PHIL STEVENSON.....	Joseph Fielding
LINDA STEVENSON	Elise Pratt
ERNEST LIPTON	Colin Gray
THE MOUSTACHE	Stefano Perti
NARRATOR	Katie Ryan
ENSEMBLE	Jim Anesta, Ryan Collins, Jerald Kaplan, Nicole Mattiello, Alex McKhann, Daniel Molloy, Andrew Nelson, Erica Pishdadian, Kelsey Usher
Director	Sean Flaherty
Stage Manager	Wesley Doyle
Costume Design	Sarah Pacitti

THE MOUSTACHE

by Davis Alianiello

Scene 1

(The stage is dark. A single light shines on the NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR. Change. It occurs everywhere and inside everyone. From the moment we are born until the moment we die our world is changing, often in completely unexpected ways.

(The spotlight shines on a man. He is walking purposefully, dressed in a suit. He freezes.)

NARRATOR. Introducing Mr. Phil Stevenson, who lives in a small country called Baffiria. All his life, Phil has tried to do the right thing. He was never the most ambitious or the most articulate, but he was always the nicest.

(Flashback.)

ANGRY DRIVER. Look what you've done to my car, you idiot! Do you have any idea how expensive this will be to repair? Well I'm not paying a dime, you hear me?

PHIL. I hear you, sir. I'm sorry, really. You know what, why don't you just take my car.

(PHIL gives his keys to the ANGRY DRIVER.)

ANGRY DRIVER. I'm gonna—wait, what?

PHIL. Just take my car. I'll buy another one somehow.

ANGRY DRIVER. Oh. Well, ok. Thanks.

PHIL. Bye.

(Focus returns on NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR. Phil didn't believe that nice guys finished last. He genuinely cared about everyone around him. Phil liked everybody. And everybody liked Phil. In fact, when he was 20, he became mayor of his village, without even entering himself on the ballot. And at 25, he had become governor of his province. It wasn't al-

ways easy for Phil to talk to crowds, but he made plenty of friends, and that helped.

(Flashback.)

PHIL. *(Nervous:)* Well, I just want to tell you all how much this office means to me. You guys...you guys are really, really great. I just want to...I want to...I want to...

FRIEND. Thank us?

PHIL. Yes, thank you all. And say that I'm really, really proud to be your...your...

FRIEND #2. Governor.

PHIL. Exactly. Your Governor. Thank you.

(There is a long pause.)

FRIEND #3. Let's hear it for our new governor, eh? Hip-hip!

ENSEMBLE. HOORAY!

FRIEND #3. Hip-hip!

ENSEMBLE. HOORAY!

FRIEND #3. Hip-hip!

ENSEMBLE. HOORAY!

(Focus returns on NARRATOR.)

NARRATOR. Phil didn't go on television much, but that was ok. His province was small, and not many people owned TV's. Phil preferred to go out and talk to the people, to meet them one on one. He gained a lot of support. At age 28, Phil met an experienced politician from the capital named Ernest Lipton. Ernest saw something in Phil that even he didn't see. He saw a chancellor.

(Flashback.)

ERNEST. Phil, you are a great guy.

PHIL. Aw, gee thanks.

ERNEST. People really like you.

PHIL. Yeah, I guess.

ERNEST. Have you ever thought about aiming higher than governor?

PHIL. No, not really. Why?

ERNEST. Phil, I want you to run for Chancellor.

PHIL. (*Very surprised:*) What? No. No, I can't.

ERNEST. Yes you can, Phil! I *believe* in you!

(ERNEST *gives* PHIL *the thumbs-up.*)

PHIL. But...Chancellor...I wouldn't know what to do.

ERNEST. Don't worry Phil, just stick with me.

PHIL. Well, alright. I'll try my best.

NARRATOR. And Phil did try his best. He went all across Baffiria, meeting new people. Baffiria was small, so it didn't take very long. Phil little by little gained the support of the people. He only went on TV twice during the entire campaign, he was running against a powerful senator, and he didn't even vote for himself. And yet, on Election Day, by some miracle, Phil came out on top.

(ENTIRE ENSEMBLE *comes up to* PHIL *and he shakes their hands, one by one.*)

NARRATOR. And so now Phil Stevenson; a nice guy from a small town, found himself running a country. The stakes were high. The nation was watching.

Scene 2

(NARRATOR *walks off.* PHIL *stands at a podium in front of a small group of* REPORTERS. *To his right, seated, is* ERNEST LIP-TON. *Camera flashes are everywhere.*)

PHIL. (*Nervously:*) And that's why, I think, maybe we should pass a bill to lower taxes.

REPORTER #1. How can you propose tax cuts with our country in such a deep debt?

(Murmured assent from REPORTERS.)

PHIL. Well, I, uh...

REPORTER #2. How do you plan on fixing our decimated education system?

PHIL. I was thinking of...

REPORTER #3. Mr. Chancellor, pollution from Baffirian plants has killed thousands of fish in just this past year. Your response?

PHIL. *(Jokingly:)* Well, Jim: there's plenty of *fish* in the *sea*.

(PHIL laughs, but nobody else does.)

REPORTER #4. ¿Cómo impera usted mi país?

PHIL. I don't...uh...I don't...

REPORTER #4. ¿COMO IMPERA USTED MI PAIS?

PHIL. I'm sorry but I don't speak...

REPORTER #5. Two trains leave for Chicago at the same speed in opposite directions. If train A is traveling at a rate of 100 miles per hour, and train B is running at a rate of 50 miles per hour, how long will it take for the public to realize you are incapable of being our leader?

PHIL. I...I don't want to...

REPORTER #3. Badchancellorsayswhat?

PHIL. What?

(There is assorted chuckling.)

PHIL. I'm sorry I don't understand.

(Chuckling quickly turns to murmuring.)

PHIL. Ok. Well, I was thinking...

REPORTER #5. Excuse me, Mr. Chancellor?

PHIL. Yes?

REPORTER #5. Did you drop this?

(REPORTER #5 holds up hat.)

PHIL. Why yes, that's my hat. Could you please give it back to me?

(REPORTER #5 reaches out hat but pulls it out of PHIL's reach. He does this again. The third time he tosses the hat to another REPORTER. The REPORTERS play keep-away with Phil's hat. They laugh and laugh.)

ERNEST. Alright that's enough. This press conference is *over*. You should all be ashamed of yourselves, picking on him. Now go, think about what you've done. Go on. Git.

(REPORTERS skulk off slowly.)

ERNEST. Lousy reporters.

PHIL. Wow, my first press conference.

ERNEST. You did good, kid.

(ERNEST gives a double thumbs-up, PHIL beams with pride.)

PHIL. (*Falsely modest:*) Aw, you're just sayin' that.

(Pause.)

Was I really?

ERNEST. Yeah. Yeah you were great!

PHIL. (*Thrilled:*) Gee, wow.

ERNEST. There's something I've been meaning to talk to you about though. Now, you're a smart person; good ideas. There is one problem though.

PHIL. (*Suddenly worried:*) There's a problem?

ERNEST. Well, yeah. The problem is a lack of confidence. You're letting those reporters walk all over you. I mean, you could barely finish a sentence.

PHIL. Yeah, I—

ERNEST. Every time you started to talk, you got interrupted.

PHIL. Yeah, I tried to—

ERNEST. It was actually kind of pathetic, as if they weren't listening to you at all.

PHIL. Yeah...I meant—

ERNEST. It is *so rude* to interrupt people.

PHIL. Yeah, I know I—

ERNEST. Never let anyone do that to you again. Do you hear me?

PHIL. Yes I...

ERNEST. Do you hear me?

PHIL. Yes. I hear you.

ERNEST. Alright. Good man! Now, let's get back to business. What you need is some confidence, some conviction. They need a chancellor who's going to answer questions, not ask them.

PHIL. Yeah?

ERNEST. Yes. I think I know just the trick.

(ERNEST puts his arm around PHIL.)

ERNEST. Phil, I want you to grow a moustache. Facial hair will make you seem older, more experienced. You'll be like Abraham Lincoln, like Albert Einstein, like...like...

PHIL. *(Enthusiastically:)* Santa Claus?

ERNEST. Yeah, that works. Like Ol' Santa Claus. Hey, that's pretty good. *(Dramatically:)* Ho, ho, ho *(Chuckles heartily:)* You are a funny man, Phil. Anyway, just think it over. It might be a worthwhile decision. Ok?

PHIL. Yep.

ERNEST. Yeah? Are you hearing me? Look at me Phil. Look me in the eyes.

(Pause.)

Think about it.

PHIL. *(Honestly, nodding:)* I will.

ERNEST. Alright. That's my boy.

(ERNEST claps PHIL on the back.)

ERNEST. You go have fun now; I've got work to do. Goodnight, Mr. Chancellor.

PHIL. *(To ERNEST, while exiting:)* Wow. Chancellor. Ok. Yeah. I'll... I'll call you. Maybe we can hang out. So, bye. Bye! Wow. Moustache. Huh.

(ERNEST waves as PHIL goes offstage. A crash is heard. ERNEST sighs and shakes his head.)

ERNEST. *(To himself:)* Nowhere to go but up.

Scene 3

(PHIL is sitting down, deep in thought. His wife LINDA is reading in a chair.)

NARRATOR. After his talk with Ernest, Phil went home to his wife Linda. Phil and Linda had been married long before Phil had entered public life. Linda was an intelligent and confident woman, and Phil loved her. She was stronger than he could ever be. And so, that night, as Phil mused over the day's occurrences, he decided he needed to talk to her.

PHIL. Honey?

LINDA. *(Looking up at him:)* Yes, dear?

PHIL. Am I fit for command?

LINDA. *(Resumes reading:)* No, dear.

PHIL. Oh.

(Long pause.)

How about now?

(LINDA looks at PHIL and raises an eyebrow, but says nothing. There is another long pause.)

PHIL. Honey?

LINDA. *(Without looking up:)* Yeah?

PHIL. Do you like chunky or smooth peanut butter?

LINDA. *(Looks up:)* What?

PHIL. Well, I was just thinking. We've been married three years and I didn't know whether you liked chunky peanut butter or smooth peanut butter.

LINDA. *(Sighs.)* Chunky, Phil. I like chunky peanut butter.

(There is a pause as LINDA starts reading again.)

PHIL. Oh.

(Pause.)

I like smooth.

(Long Pause.)

Linda?

LINDA. *(Looks up.)* What?

PHIL. Do you love me?

LINDA. *(Sighs.)* Yes, Phil. I love you.

PHIL. Even though I like smooth peanut butter?

LINDA. Yes. I love you despite the fact you like smooth peanut butter.

(Pause.)

PHIL. What if I grew a moustache?

LINDA. *(Looks up.)* Huh?

PHIL. Would you love me if I grew a moustache?

LINDA. *Why* would you grow a moustache?

PHIL. Ernest thinks if I grew a moustache I'd be a better chancellor.

LINDA. Phil. It'd take a lot more than a moustache.

(LINDA resumes reading.)

PHIL. You'd still love me though, right?

(LINDA is very exasperated. She slams her book and stands up.)

LINDA. Yes, Phil. I love you. I love you *despite* the fact that you're a horrible chancellor, *despite* the fact that you like different *peanut butter* than me, and *despite* the fact that you won't shut up and let me read. If you grew a stupid moustache, I would still love you. Now I'm going to go to another room, where I don't have to hear your inane questions all day long. And maybe, *just maybe*, if you don't say anything, I won't slam this heavy book in your face.

(LINDA leaves. There is a long pause.)

PHIL. I love you, too.

Scene 4

NARRATOR. And so Phil decided to grow his moustache. Day by day he would stare into his mirror, hoping for the best. Night by night, visions of moustaches would dance through his dreams. Seven days and seven nights passed as he waited for it to grow. Then one day, Phil emerged.

(PHIL bursts onstage. Music is playing. He has a full, thick moustache.)

PHIL. Hello world! Good morning birds!

(Birds chirp from high above as PHIL passes two pedestrians.)

Good morning friends!

PEDESTRIAN #1. Good morning Mr. Stevenson. You're looking competent today.

PEDESTRIAN #2. Hello Mr. Chancellor, lovely day for a stroll.

PHIL. It is isn't it? I feel on top of the world!

(PHIL passes a group of kids playing hopscotch.)

PHIL. Hey, kids! Can I play?

KID. Sure, Mr. Chancellor!

(PHIL plays a round of hopscotch.)

Gee golly!

(PHIL ruffles KID's hair in a fatherly fashion.)

REPORTER #1. Mr. Stevenson, that sure was a devastating press conference last week. You must feel awful.

PHIL. Nope. Actually I'm feeling better than ever!

REPORTER #1. *(Surprised and a little disappointed:)* Oh. Are you sure?

PHIL. Yep! I'm HAPPY!

REPORTER #1. Oh. Well, then. I'll be on my way.

(REPORTER #1 walks away.)

PHIL. Goodbye, friend! Merry Christmas!

REPORTER #1. It's, uh, it's June.

PHIL. *(Laughing heartily:)* Of course it is.

KID. Look everybody! Here comes the Dancing Elephant!

(DANCING ELEPHANT enters. PHIL and DANCING ELEPHANT silently but enthusiastically exchange greetings. There is a short dance interlude, ending with everyone gathered around PHIL.)

PHIL. I love this country!

(TOWNSPEOPLE exit while ERNEST enters.)

ERNEST. Well, well! Mr. Chancellor! I like the new look.

PHIL. Gee, thanks Ernest.

ERNEST. Yes. Yes. What do you say to a celebratory round of racquetball?

(ERNEST mimes playing racquetball.)

PHIL. *Racquetball?* Well, I've never played before and I don't really know how to...

ERNEST. *(Clapping him on the back:)* Nonsense! It's easy! Come on, It'll be fun!

PHIL. Well, ok. You're on!

ERNEST. That's the spirit!

(PHIL and ERNEST give each other high fives.)

Scene 5

(PHIL and ERNEST stride in confidently in racquetball attire. LINDA is sitting in the study, reading.)

NARRATOR. Yes, Phil's moustache had impressed his subjects and his colleagues. So that night, Phil returned home, now aiming to impress the most important person of all.

PHIL. *(From offstage:)* I'm back, Linda!

LINDA. Where were you, playing hopscotch?

PHIL. *No.* I was playing some manly *racquetball* with Ernest.

LINDA. Phil, do you even know how to play racquetball?

PHIL. Yes, as a matter of fact I do.

(PHIL and ERNEST stride in. They are wearing full workout attire with headbands and wristbands. They also have rackets.)

LINDA. *(Still looking down:)* Well, Phil, you've never played racquetball in your—

(LINDA looks up and is dumbstruck for a moment.)

Phil?

PHIL. What are you staring at, Linda? Could it be that you like my... *(Flexes while pointing to moustache.)* moustache?

LINDA. Actually, yes.

PHIL. *(Breaks macho attitude:)* Really?! *(With renewed machismo:)* Well, I'm not surprised. Everyone does: the press, the public, and now my woman. Project moustache is a complete success!

PHIL / ERNEST. *(While doing a secret handshake:)* UP!

(Slap up.)

DOWN!

(Slap down.)

ALL AROUND!

(Both spin, high five and pantomime with rackets in unison.)

ERNEST. YEAH! WOO!

(ERNEST exits, there is an offstage crash.)

LINDA. So is that what you were doing in your room all week?

PHIL. Yep.

LINDA. *(Sighs.)* Well, you are still childish and stupid. But at least you're confident. Phil, I respect you.

PHIL. Do you really mean it?

LINDA. You bet I do.

Scene 6

NARRATOR. Phil and his moustache had certainly captured the hearts of the people. But that night, while working in his study, Phil began to get worried. He realized that although he now looked the part, he was just as incapable of making important decisions as he was before. Phil couldn't lose the trust of the nation again. He wished and hoped for the strength he needed to run his country. Little did Phil know, his prayers would soon be answered.

(PHIL is working in his study. He yawns and begins to doze off.)

MOUSTACHE. A little tired are we?

PHIL. *(Dazed:)* What? Who said that?

MOUSTACHE. I did.

PHIL. Who...where are you?

MOUSTACHE. Why, I'm right under your nose.

(MOUSTACHE *chuckles heartily, while PHIL thrashes at the air.*)

MOUSTACHE. There's no need for alarm, Phil. I'm here to help. Do you still not know who I am?

PHIL. No.

MOUSTACHE. I am your moustache.

(MOUSTACHE *chuckles.*)

PHIL. But...but that's ridiculous. Moustaches can't talk. Everyone knows that!

MOUSTACHE. Who are you going to believe, Phil? Some silly people? Or your own moustache?

(MOUSTACHE *laughs once again.*)

PHIL. Well, I guess when you put it that way.

(PHIL *and his MOUSTACHE laugh together.*)

PHIL. Oh, Moustache.

LINDA. (*From offstage:*) What's all that noise?

PHIL. Oh...nothing, honey.

LINDA. I heard laughing.

PHIL. Yes, I'm watching cartoons. They're very funny. Ha ha.

(*Pause.*)

LINDA. Well keep it down. I'm trying to work.

(PHIL *sighs.*)

MOUSTACHE. That wife of yours: she doesn't *really* understand you does she?

PHIL. Well...um...yeah, I think she—

MOUSTACHE. (*Interrupting:*) I understand you, Phil.

PHIL. You do?

MOUSTACHE. Yes. You're a very special person.

PHIL. Wow. Thanks.

MOUSTACHE. You and I, We're going places.

PHIL. Oh. Where?

MOUSTACHE. To the top, Phil. To the top.

Scene 7

(NARRATOR talks as PHIL acts out his training in pantomime.)

NARRATOR. Phil's moustache trained him. It dictated speeches while Phil copied down diligently, and it schooled Phil on the fine points of rhetoric and leadership. Phil gradually became more confident. He spoke eloquently and debated skillfully. With the Moustache as his aid, Phil learned to rule his country with an iron fist.

MOUSTACHE. Now remember Phil: the key to running a country effectively is to appear strong. Don't let anyone push you around. Take charge. You are the ruler.

PHIL. Mhmm.

MOUSTACHE. Say it. Say "I am the ruler."

PHIL. I am the ruler.

MOUSTACHE. *Who is the ruler?*

PHIL. *I am the ruler.*

MOUSTACHE. *Who is the ruler?*

PHIL. I am the ruler!

MOUSTACHE. *(Yelling:) WHO IS THE RULER?*

PHIL. *(Out of control:) I AM THE RULER!*

(LINDA enters and looks at PHIL funny. PHIL appears sheepish and LINDA sighs and walks off.)

MOUSTACHE. Now, didn't that feel nice?

PHIL. Yeah. Yeah, you know, it kinda did. I am the ruler!

MOUSTACHE. Alright, we're finally starting to make some progress.

PHIL. I AM THE RULER!

MOUSTACHE. That's enough.

PHIL. OKAY.

MOUSTACHE. Now as long as you put that kind of conviction into your decisions you'll be fine.

PHIL. But what if I'm faced with an issue and I don't know what to do?

MOUSTACHE. You'll know what to do. *You are the ruler.*

PHIL. Oh. Okay. That makes sense.

MOUSTACHE. Yes it does. You see, Phil, these things aren't so difficult after all.

PHIL. I guess not.

(PHIL and MOUSTACHE laugh together. There is a knock at the door.)

PHIL. Come in. ahem. *(Confidently:)* COME IN!

ANGRY MAN. Are you the owner of a car with the license plate 67801?

PHIL. Why yes. That would be my *Chancellormobile!*

ANGRY MAN. Yeah, well your "*Chancellormobile*" rammed me from behind two days ago, and *you* drove away from the accident. I'll have you know I've notified the police. I guess the big man with a fancy car thinks that he can get away with everything!

PHIL. Moustache, what should I do?

MOUSTACHE. Punch him in the face.

(PHIL punches ANGRY MAN, who is knocked out on the ground.)

PHIL. I AM THE RULER!

Scene 8

(PHIL is at a press conference. He is flanked by guards.)

NARRATOR. Every day the moustache taught Phil. And Phil began to change. He became stronger and more ruthless. He appeared in public less often. When he did, he was always flanked by military guards. He eliminated his enemies. He imprisoned his critics. Phil became—

(PHIL barges in, knocking down the NARRATOR and interrupting her speech. He does not seem to notice her. She stands up, brushes herself off, and walks away, looking at PHIL, who strides confidently to the podium.)

MOUSTACHE. Remember Phil: strength.

PHIL. Ahem. The time has come for us to build a bridge. A metaphorical bridge, between us and our allies. A bridge that will stretch farther than the eye can see, into the metaphorical clouds. And by using this bridge, we can reach our ultimate destination: *coexistence*.

(Applause issues from the reporters. PHIL puts up his hand for silence.)

PHIL. We need...to *make changes!*

(There are shouts of assent.)

We need...to *stand tall*. We need to take the world by the throat and slam it against the bricks of freedom. We need to be *winners!*

(There is thunderous applause. PHIL raises his hand again.)

PHIL. Countrymen, I will now take your questions.

REPORTER #1. *(Strained and contrived:)* Mr. Chancellor, I think I speak for my entire country when I point out what an amazing job you've done.

(Applause.)

PHIL. Thank you, I agree. Next question.

REPORTER #2. Yes. How do you respond to claims that you took political advice from your *moustache*?

(PHIL looks slightly afraid. He glares at REPORTER #2. PHIL snaps, GUARDS come in and drag out REPORTER #2. PHIL smiles again.)

PHIL. Next.

REPORTER #3. Mr. Chancellor, pollution from Baffirian plants has killed thousands of fish in only the past year. Your response?

PHIL. *(Pauses, smiles wide:)* Well, Jim there's plenty of *fish* in the *sea*.

(REPORTERS chuckle.)

Stop laughing.

(The laughter abruptly stops.)

REPORTER #4. Excuse me Mr. Chancellor; did you drop this huge wad of cash?

PHIL. I sure did.

(PHIL winks and takes money.)

REPORTER #5. Mr. Chancellor, could I have your autograph?

PHIL. Sure, son.

(PHIL signs autograph and ruffles hair of REPORTER #5.)

There you go.

REPORTER #5. Gee, Thanks!

(He runs off excited.)

REPORTER #1. Mr. Chancellor...how do you do it?

PHIL. Well, my friend; that's one question that I just can't answer.

(Winks again.)

I think I've said enough here. I hope you've learned a lot. I know I have. Just remember: work hard, love your country, and don't ask questions.

(PHIL abruptly becomes solemn followed by an equally abrupt wide smile and wave. REPORTERS exit and PHIL stops smiling.)

PHIL. I think that went very well.

MOUSTACHE. Yes, Phil. You're finally beginning to understand. Everyone—even those who you might think are harmless—everyone wants to be on top. And you are. Just behave like you did today Phil, You'll stay on top.

PHIL. *(To GUARDS:)* Time to survey the capital. Come gentlemen, duty calls.

Scene 9

(PHIL strides into town, flanked by two GUARDS. The chirping of birds is heard. PHIL stops and his guards shoot the birds.)

NARRATOR. Phil was completely—

(PHIL snaps and GUARDS arrest a stunned NARRATOR.)

You...you can't arrest me...

(PHIL watches as NARRATOR is dragged off. GUARDS re-enter, PHIL continues walking.)

PEDESTRIAN #1. Good mo-oo-orning!

(PHIL stares at him then snaps his fingers. The GUARDS drag PEDESTRIAN #1 off. Yelling is heard, followed by gunshots. The GUARDS re-enter.)

PEDESTRIAN #2. 'Ello Mr. Chancellor, lovely day for a—

(PHIL snaps and PEDESTRIAN #2 is shot.)

KID. Hey Mr. Chancellor, how about a round of hopscotch.

(PHIL snaps. GUARD #1 takes out an empty spray bottle and washes away the hopscotch court.)

KID. Hey, that's my hopscotch court!

PHIL. You are under arrest for public defamation.

KID. *(While being arrested by GUARD:)* But...but it was just chalk.

(DANCING ELEPHANT comes onstage. DANCING ELEPHANT offers a hand to PHIL. He wants to dance. He makes a

cheerful growl. PHIL snaps and the DANCING ELEPHANT is shot as well.)

PHIL. I hate these people.

(PHIL strides off, with his GUARDS trailing.)

Scene 10

(The scene opens in Ernest's office. He is spinning in his chair, making paper airplanes, whistling, and generally not doing any work. The phone rings.)

ERNEST. Hello? This is the Vice Chancellor speaking. *(Pause.)* No, he's taking a stroll. *(Pause.)* No, well, I'm sure he didn't do *that*. *(Pause.)* No, he doesn't even own a machete. Well, alright. Buh-bye.

(The phone rings again.)

Hello? This is Ernest. *(Pause.)* And you're sure that they're *dead*? *(Pause.)* Well, why don't you go check again? Alright. Buh-bye.

(The phone rings for a third time.)

Yeeello? *(Pause.)* Really? The Dancing Elephant? *(Pause.)* Well, yes, these are very trying times, Mrs. Dancing Elephant. *(Pause.)* Tell you what, I'll send you a fruit basket. Free of charge. My condolences. Buh-bye.

(PHIL walks in. Two GUARDS tag behind him. A third is dragging a dead body. ERNEST takes feet off desk.)

ERNEST. Hey, pal. How was your walk?

PHIL. *(Flatly:)* People kneel before me.

ERNEST. Aw, gee. That's great.

PHIL. Hey, do you know where Joe keeps the garbage bags?

ERNEST. Third floor closet.

(ERNEST spots the dead body and becomes uncomfortable.)

Hey-uh-whaddaya got there, sport?

(GUARDS look at each other. GUARD #1 raises his gun, but PHIL looks at him harshly and he puts it down.)

PHIL. *(Curtly:)* Don't worry about it.

(PHIL and his GUARDS exit.)

ERNEST. Hey...uh...Phil? So, yeah, I'll call you? Maybe we can hang out? I'll stop by tomorrow. We can have lunch or something. I'll make sandwiches!

(ERNEST laughs nervously and then sighs.)

Scene 11

(ERNEST knocks on the door.)

LINDA. *(Without looking up:)* Come on in.

ERNEST. Linda?

(LINDA looks up, annoyed.)

LINDA. Mm?

(ERNEST gives her the thumbs up.)

ERNEST. Hey.

LINDA. What do you want?

ERNEST. Well, I wanted to talk to Phil.

LINDA. He's out terrorizing the populace. This whole moustache idea of yours has gotten way out of control. I'll admit that at first I liked his confidence; he wasn't letting people walk all over him. But now he's on a megalomaniacal power trip. He has those guards follow him everywhere. He shoots everything in sight.

ERNEST. Oh, you're overreacting.

LINDA. Ernest, he's *killing innocent people.*

ERNEST. Well, he's under a lot of stress.

LINDA. Listen Ernest, I know that keeping Phil in power is in your best interest, but one of these days, *you* might make the wrong

move. When that happens, it's not going to be an anonymous towns person he's arresting, it's going to be you.

(This has an impact on ERNEST. There is a long pause.)

ERNEST. I still think we can reason with him.

LINDA. Reason with him? The man has lost it! He even *talks* to his moustache.

ERNEST. Well...maybe...wait, he talks to his *moustache*?

LINDA. All the time, jabbering away at ungodly hours of the night.

ERNEST. What does he talk to it about?

LINDA. *Everything.* What bills he should veto, what he should write in his speeches. He even asks it what he should eat for breakfast.

ERNEST. Wow. Does the moustache talk back?

(Pause.)

LINDA. Ernest, it's a *moustache*. Moustaches can't talk. Everyone knows that.

ERNEST. Yes, I suppose you're right.

LINDA. Anyway, I don't know what to do. I just wish I had the cowardly, neurotic, pansy Phil back.

ERNEST. That does it. I'm going to talk to Phil. Try to reason with him. Maybe I can make him understand what his behavior is doing to the country. Maybe I can even convince him to shave off the moustache.

(PHIL comes up to the door stage left. He is about to enter but stops when he hears voices.)

LINDA. Are you kidding? The man is clueless. He'll never realize why we feel this way.

ERNEST. Maybe not, but I'm going to try to tell him anyway.

LINDA. Well, good luck Ernest.

ERNEST. Thanks Linda. Goodnight.

(ERNEST exits downstage right. LINDA exits upstage right. PHIL walks in.)

MOUSTACHE. Well, I wonder what all that was about.

PHIL. What do you mean?

MOUSTACHE. Come on, Phil. “Why we feel this way?” It doesn’t take a genius to realize what’s going on here.

PHIL. Well...it was a little...but you don’t think that she’s...

MOUSTACHE. Cheating on you? I wouldn’t be surprised. That Ernest has been trying to steal your position since you entered office. It’s only natural that he’d try to steal your woman too.

PHIL. Steal Linda? But Ernest is my best friend!

MOUSTACHE. When will you realize, Phil? *I’m* your only friend. Ernest may seem like a “nice guy,” but deep down he *hates* you. He’s jealous of everything you have, and so he betrayed you.

PHIL. Wow. I’ve...I’ve been so stupid.

MOUSTACHE. Yes, you have.

PHIL. What do I do now?

MOUSTACHE. Ernest has already taken your wife. Your job is next. You *must* take action.

(There is a knock at the door. It is ERNEST.)

ERNEST. Linda? Linda I forgot my stuff in there. Linda?

(PHIL opens the door, silencing ERNEST.)

PHIL. Hello, Ernest.

ERNEST. Oh. Hey Phil.

(ERNEST gives the thumbs up and smiles. PHIL remains deadpan.)

So, I uh, forgot some of my stuff in here.

(PHIL wordlessly beckons him inside.)

ERNEST. *(Trying desperately to break the tension:)* Lets see, jacket, briefcase, lunchbox. Oh hey, I wonder what I have.

(He opens it up.)

PB & J! Alright!

(PHIL is still deadpan. ERNEST waves his sandwich about.)

ERNEST. Peanut butter and jelly.

(PHIL does nothing. ERNEST begins eating.)

ERNEST. Mmmmm. It's really, really good. Want some?

(PHIL remains silent.)

ERNEST. Want a bite?

(PHIL looks at him, there is a long pause.)

PHIL. Is that...chunky peanut butter?

ERNEST. *(Chewing:)* Huh?

PHIL. *(Irritated:)* Is that chunky peanut butter?

ERNEST. Yep, good ol' chunky peanut butter. Peanuts *and* peanut butter...best of both worlds, eh?

PHIL. No. Stop eating it.

ERNEST. Huh?

PHIL. Stop eating that sandwich.

(PHIL grabs the sandwich and throws it offstage.)

This chunky peanut butter brouhaha ends *here!*

ERNEST. Hey, that's my...

PHIL. DON'T MOVE.

ERNEST. Why did you just...

PHIL. Shut up. You know what your problem is? You're too happy. Stop smiling.

ERNEST. But I'm not...

PHIL. Also, I've been meaning to talk to you about your name. It needs to be changed. Ernest is an adjective, not a name. Your new name is John.

ERNEST. But—

PHIL. Don't talk back to me John.

ERNEST. Phil, I think we need to talk.

PHIL. I think we've done quite enough talking. Get out of my office. Now.

(PHIL points to the door and ERNEST exits.)

You were right Moustache. That man is no friend of mine. What am I supposed to do?

MOUSTACHE. There's only one thing you can do.

PHIL. You don't mean...you don't want me to...

MOUSTACHE. Nobody would know except you and me.

PHIL. I'm not sure that I...

MOUSTACHE. Pull yourself together, man! Have you forgotten *everything* I've taught you? Do you really want your life to be like it was before I came along? Ernest is no different than any of the others you've killed. Don't be weak. Not now, not after all we've accomplished.

PHIL. You're right. You are absolutely right.

MOUSTACHE. Then tonight, we kill.

Scene 12

(It is nighttime. PHIL tiptoes into Ernest's room, where ERNEST is sleeping.)

MOUSTACHE. Quietly Phil, quietly.

PHIL. Yes. *(Loudly:)* Quietly!

ERNEST. What? Who said that? Who are you? HELP! HEEELLLLP!

(PHIL shoots ERNEST twice. He is quiet for a short time and then continues yelling. PHIL shoots him three more times and he is silent. PHIL glances around, and then shoots him again twice. The phone rings.)

PHIL. Hello? This is Vice Chancellor Ernest speaking. How may I help you?

VOICE. Are you alright, Ernest? Loud noises were heard coming from your room.

PHIL. Yes, well, no need for alarm. It's just loud music.

(ERNEST moans and PHIL kicks him until he stops.)

VOICE. Are you sure that you're ok? We heard yelling for help.

PHIL. Yes, help getting over my *dance fever*.

VOICE. You're positive that everything's fine?

PHIL. Yes. YES. I am perfectly fine. No more questions.

(PHIL hangs up the phone. He goes to leave, turns, goes back, and shoots ERNEST five more times. PHIL exits.)

Scene 13

(PHIL is in his study, working.)

MOUSTACHE. I liked the way you handled that situation with Ernest last night.

PHIL. Thank you, Moustache. It had to be done. I can't have people like that living in *my country*.

MOUSTACHE. I quite agree.

PHIL. If only everyone could be as perfect as we are.

MOUSTACHE. If only.

(PHIL and MOUSTACHE chuckle heartily.)

LINDA. (Offstage:) What's all that noise?

PHIL. Nothing, woman!

(LINDA enters.)

LINDA. Are you talking to your moustache again?

PHIL. No.

LINDA. Yes you are. You're talking to your moustache.

PHIL. You are out of your gourd, woman!

LINDA. Stop calling me that.

PHIL. Never!

LINDA. You've changed Phil. Things are different. You don't care about me anymore; all you care about is your stupid moustache.

PHIL. That's not true.

LINDA. Yes it is. You've gone too far Phil. I'm giving you an ultimatum: the moustache goes or I go.

(Pause.)

PHIL. (*Whispering:*) Moustache! What should I do?

LINDA. That's a good enough answer for me.

(LINDA turns around and walks out.)

PHIL. You can't leave me! I'm Phillip Stevenson! I run this country! Now get back here and fix me dinner!

(Pause.)

(*Weakly:*) Please?

MOUSTACHE. Forget about her, Phil. We don't need Linda! We don't need anyone!

PHIL. You're absolutely right, talking moustache.

MOUSTACHE. Of course I am. Now, let's to get back to work.

PHIL. Yes, of course. Work.

(PHIL sits down.)

MOUSTACHE. I think you know as well as I do that you were made for bigger things than just running one country. It's time for

you to expand your borders: to branch out, to invade. Baffiria is much too small for a man with such a big moustache.

PHIL. Yes.

MOUSTACHE. To war, then?

PHIL. To war.

Scene 14

(PHIL is in his study. The GUARDS stand in the corner. He is sitting in front of a mirror while two ASSISTANTS prepare his hair and moustache for a TV appearance. When they are finished, they smile, awaiting Phil's approval. He glares at them, and they scurry off. PHIL stands up straight and looks in the mirror.)

MOUSTACHE. Well Phil, this is it. Tonight we announce to the world our glorious plan for Baffirian expansion. It is a great day for you...for *us*.

PHIL. Indeed it is, Moustache. It's a shame that we have to share this historic occasion with the lowly people of this country.

MOUSTACHE. They're contemptible.

PHIL. Yes they are. They're disgusting, despicable, *disgraceful* commoners. I *hate* them! *I HATE THEM SO MUCH!*

MOUSTACHE. There, there Phil. Don't waste your time thinking about *them*. Think about the glory this will bring to *us*. Phil Stevenson...Emperor!

PHIL. Of course, Moustache.

(PHIL looks back in the mirror and adjusts his tie.)

PHIL. How do I look?

MOUSTACHE. Powerful!

(TWO MEN wait at the entrance, one holding a camera and tripod. The man without the camera speaks.)

MAN #1. Is Your Excellency ready?

PHIL. (*Disgusted:*) I am.

(*MEN begin to walk in.*)

PHIL. (*Enraged:*) What are you doing?

MAN #1. Setting up.

PHIL. You will *bow* when you enter my presence!

(*The MEN bow, and then begin to straighten up.*)

Remain bowing!

(*The MEN look at each other and shrug. They walk in bowed and set up the camera. The GUARDS stand near the desk.*)

Alright. Now *kneel!*

MAN #2. But if we kneel than I can't operate the—

PHIL. *YOU WILL OBEY MY COMMANDS, SIR!*

(*The MEN kneel. PHIL walks over to his desk and sits down. He begins sorting papers. GUARD #1 whispers something in his ear.*)

PHIL. (*To GUARD #1:*) Oh no, don't kill them yet.

(*GUARD #1 whispers something else in response.*)

No, no. We need them to film this address.

(*GUARD #1 whispers something else.*)

Oh, sure, you can do whatever you want with them *then.*

(*PHIL turns to the kneeling men with the camera.*)

PHIL. Begin filming!

(*MAN #2 starts the camera. PHIL glares at the camera and begins his address in an authoritative manner.*)

PHIL. People of Baffiria! Today is a turning point in the history of our...of *my* great nation. Today is the day that our children, and our children's children, and our children's children's children, will look back upon. They will say, with a swell of patriotism: "Our Chancellor was the greatest man ever to live!" I say this because it is with great pride that I announce my brilliant new plan for Baffirian ex-

pansion. Too long has our country been content to remain *small*. To sit behind restrictive borders! To wallow in mediocrity! *No longer!* My people, today our great Baffirian army marches toward a new horizon. A brighter future, where the Baffirian flag will fly above every building, on every street corner, in every window; from here to the four corners of the earth! Baffiria will fight! Baffiria will prevail! *Baffiria will rule!* We will grow and grow and grow—like a magnificent moustache upon the face of the earth. And the people of the world will raise their voices in a grand and glorious cheer of “Baffiria forever!”

(The camera shuts off and everyone claps politely and quietly. The GUARDS and MEN exit. The MEN exit on their knees.)

PHIL. Now we begin our rise...to the top!

Scene 15

NARRATOR. And to the top they went! Phil’s Baffirian army conquered far and wide. Phil declared himself Emperor. Nations bowed down before his mighty military. And the more places he invaded, the hungrier he became.

(PHIL enters. He goes center stage and surveys the land. Conquering music begins. He gestures, and a uniformed army marches onstage. They tear down an existing banner and replace it with a Baffirian one. PHIL nods approvingly. Dazed and confused people enter and are arrested by soldiers. PHIL waves as they are taken off, and looks proudly at his flag. He is now alone onstage.)

PHIL. Isn’t it magnificent, Moustache?

MOUSTACHE. *We’re* magnificent, Phil. We’ve already expanded Baffirian borders further than anyone ever dreamed. The rest of the world is ours for the taking.

PHIL. Indeed! We shall celebrate our victories tonight, when we get back home to the capital.

Scene 16

(PHIL is alone in his study. He is drinking champagne and he has unbuttoned his tie.)

MOUSTACHE. Another day goes by, another Baffirian banner is hung!

PHIL. *(Raising his glass in a toast:)* To Baffiria!

MOUSTACHE. No Phil, to *us*.

(PHIL nods and drinks. He smacks his lips loudly.)

PHIL. Yes Moustache, today marks a glorious victory for the both of us.

MOUSTACHE. Well put, Phil. Do you know what else today marks?

PHIL. Why no, what?

MOUSTACHE. The three year anniversary of my growth.

PHIL. Really? My God, has it been that long?

MOUSTACHE. We've certainly come a long way.

PHIL. Yes we have.

MOUSTACHE. I got you a present Phil.

PHIL. You didn't!

MOUSTACHE. It's right outside the door.

(PHIL goes to the door, where there is a big box. He is delighted. PHIL opens the box to find a nuclear arsenal.)

PHIL. Nuclear weapons! You spoil me, Moustache.

MOUSTACHE. I was hoping we could use them together.

PHIL. Well, I don't know. These bombs could cause serious damage.

MOUSTACHE. I know Phil, that's the point. We wipe the slate clean, and then we can start anew. It's much more efficient.

THIS PLAY IS NOT OVER!

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