

J A M U
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Theatre faculty / Janáček Academy
of Performing Arts

WE DON'T HAVE TANKS...

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1st place
The Student Mini-Drama Contest
2022

Theatre faculty of JAMU in cooperation with
The Václav Havel Library Foundation in New York

1.

We are at the border of the states of Metuplebisia and the Republic of Pati. A yellow line runs through the centre of the scene, symbolising the border of the Republic of Pati. On this line stands one of the two border guard booths. It belongs to Alot, a soldier from Pati. 24.5 cm from Alot's booth is the booth of the Metuplebian border guard Fera. It stands on the green line – the border of Metuplebisia. A number of green lines are also on the right side of Fera's booth, although it is clear that someone has tried to wash them off. The nearest one is 24.5 cm away from Fera's booth, the next one is 49 cm away from the previous line, the next one is 98 cm away from the last line and so on...

Today is unusually busy on the Metuplebian side of the border. While Fera has been marching on his side for some time, Alot has only now been lured out of the booth by the commotion. He's obviously just had a snack, holding the rest of the carrot, which he's still crunching on at speed. He watches his colleague for a while, then starts a dialogue.

ALOT: You're being weird today.

FERA: Stress at work.

ALOT: We do the same thing.

FERA: Each on a different side.

ALOT: *(pointing to a badly washed off set of border lines on Fera's side)* But we're getting closer and closer... Which reminds me, when are you shifting again?

FERA: Next Friday.

ALOT: How many centimetres?

FERA: 12.25.

ALOT: The current 24.5 isn't enough?

FERA: The order was: "Approach the borders of Pati at half the current distance for twenty-five months."

ALOT: I'm looking forward to you moving millimetres in six months. *(leaning over the border towards Fera)* Doesn't that seem absurd to you?

FERA: The order was clear. In this way, in 25 months, we'll move to the exact level of your borders.

ALOT: I guess your leadership doesn't excel in maths, do they?

FERA: *(crosses the borders of Metuplebisia and Pati and approaches Alot's booth, looks around and then says quietly)* I'm afraid they miscalculated.

At that moment, there are several screams on the Metuplebian side, followed by the sound of falling and shattering. Alot registers the commotion and crosses the border to the Metuplebian side to take a good look around. Fera follows him a little nervously.

ALOT: What's going on here today?

FERA: Nothing interesting.

ALOT: *(pointing somewhere to the distance)* Isn't there a tank coming?

FERA: Metuplebisia doesn't have tanks.

ALOT: You have a Facebook profile picture with a tank in it.
FERA: It's not Metuplebian.
ALOT: It has your flag on it.
FERA: No, it doesn't.
ALOT: It does.
FERA: Absolutely not!
ALOT: You told me you learned to drive it in military school.
FERA: That was for emergencies. In case there was a war and I stole one.
ALOT: And the one you trained with wasn't yours?
FERA: Metuplebisia doesn't have tanks.

A moment of silence that reveals all the bustle; the rustle of bushes being walked through, vehicles starting in the distance, whispers, in short, a kind of general bustle.

ALOT: Hey, seriously, what's going on here?
FERA: Nothing, just a military exercise.

2.

After a few months there. Fera's booth is now 1.5 cm away from Alot's. There are also clear lines indicating that it was 3 cm, 6.12 cm and 12.25 cm away before. Alot and Fera are standing in front of their booths.

ALOT: I dreamt I was baking a carrot cake today.
FERA: I prefer my carrots salted.
ALOT: That's because you haven't tasted my carrot cake yet.
FERA: I have. You brought it here at least five times last year because you had a lot of carrots in your garden.
ALOT: I remember. ...
FERA: You might want to try carrot puree this year. And maybe some pork tenderloin.
ALOT: I don't think I'll do that.
FERA: Don't you like meat recipes?
ALOT: I won't have carrots.
FERA: You're switching to tomatoes?
ALOT: No. There's a tank parked in my garden.
FERA: Why did you park it in the garden?
ALOT: It's not mine. It's been standing there since you attacked us... *(he notices Fera's disapproving expression, rolling his eyes)* ... sorry... since you started helping us manage our economic problems a few months ago. Militarily ...

FERA: You mean your government parked it there as part of austerity measures?

ALOT: No. I mean, it's yours.

FERA: But Metuplebisian doesn't have tanks.

ALOT: *(crosses the border to Fera's side)* So why is your soldier sleeping in it?

(Fera shrugs.)

ALOT: Could you maybe talk to him? Like Metuplebisian with Metuplebisian? I've asked him several times to leave, but it's like talking to a wall.

FERA: I'd really like to, but it's definitely not our tank.

ALOT: He wouldn't even have to go far, he'd just have to drive a few metres so that there is space for planting.

FERA: Like I said, it's not our tank. We don't have tanks.

ALOT: It has your flag on it and your soldier sleeping in it.

FERA: He probably put it there to make himself at home.

ALOT: Why would he live in someone else's tank?

FERA: Maybe your local government put him there.

Alot rolls his eyes and walks back to Pati territory. Fera follows him and, with a certain amount of curiosity in his voice, states.

FERA: In Metuplebisian, they say your countryside is pretty backward. ...

ALOT: We are backward?

FERA: I hear you don't even have outhouses. ...

ALOT: Yeah, we don't have those. We have regular flush toilets instead. *(pause)* Hey Fera, I don't really care what you think of us in Metuplebisian. I want to know if you can help me with my garden. You often say that brotherly help is important.

FERA: I can't organise the removal of your tank by our soldier.

ALOT: There would be no removal. Just a small move to the left.

FERA: What if my superiors hear of it?

ALOT: Then you tell them it was economic aid. And that I'll help you when you need it.

FERA: *(is walking back to the Metuplebian half)* We don't need anyone's help.

ALOT: I meant hypothetically.

FERA: No Metuplebisian needs help from a stranger. Not even hypothetically.

ALOT: Never?

FERA: Never!

Fera goes back into his booth.

3.

Two weeks later. Fera's booth is now 7.6 mm away from Alot's. Alot is standing guard crunching on a carrot. Fera is trying to wash off the border line that was present in the last scene. It's a bit busy on the Metuplebian side.

ALOT: I can't eat this.

FERA: Then don't read it.

ALOT: Not read. I'm saying that the carrot from the shop is inedible.

FERA: Then don't eat it.

ALOT: But I like carrots.

FERA: What do parrots have to do with it?

ALOT: Shouldn't you get your ears checked?

FERA: I'm sorry. We had an emergency training this weekend and a grenade went off right by my ear.

ALOT: Emergency training? You're not coming to help us again, are you?

FERA: I couldn't tell you that even if I knew. But this time we're just practicing... *(Fera looks around to see if anyone is around. Then he comes to Alot's side of the border and quietly confides in him.)* ...because the leadership don't seem to have confidence in our abilities. Mostly, they say, in our mental capacity. I don't get it, do you?

ALOT: Yes. After the few months of having your tank man living in my garden, I completely understand.

FERA: You think we're idiots.

ALOT: No. I don't think you're an idiot. But most of your little soldiers are a danger to themselves and to their surroundings. That dumb-ass in my garden has almost killed himself with his own tank several times.

FERA: But...

We hear footsteps coming from the bushes. Fera jumps up, quickly returns to the front of his booth and stands at attention. Alot looks at him in amazement and is about to open his mouth to ask what's going on when a man in uniform emerges from one of the bushes. At the same time, a murmur of voices can be heard in the background, the snapping of branches and the clanging of metal as it approaches. Fera salutes.

FERA: General!

GENERAL: Silence! I'm here for an inspection. Undercover.

FERA: *(quietly.)* Yes, sir. Is there anything I can do to assist you?

GENERAL: A group of soldiers with a tank are about to arrive. Just keep them from going further.

FERA: May I ask, sir, what use is a tank at the border?

GENERAL: No use. I just wanted to test if they could make it this far without hurting themselves.

FERA: Do you want to hide in my booth?

GENERAL: No, I'll hide away in the bush. I want the best view.

The General quickly leaves and hides in the bush that stands exactly on the border between the two countries. Alot looks at everything in amazement. He takes a breath to ask Fera, but runs out of words.

The approaching voices that had been heard until now suddenly fall silent. There is silence for a minute or so, and then there is a barrage of swearing. One of the voices rises above the others and sounds as if it is giving instructions. There is a cacophony of random thumps and squeaks indicating work. After some time, there is a disgruntled muttering and the same leading voice again gives instructions. Again, a jumble of sounds. After a while, however, the voices change diction quite suddenly, indicating that panic has set in. The leading person shouts something unintelligibly and urgently, but from the indistinct shouts of the others it seems to be in vain. Finally, someone shouts so desperately and loudly that even Alot and Fera can understand.

VOICE: Get away!

About two seconds later, there is a deafening bang. Fera and Alot automatically fall to the ground. Something at a high speed crashes into the bush where the General had hidden a moment ago. The bush explodes. The General's remains fly into the air and fall back to the ground in several pieces. The pressure wave damages both booths. Two soldiers come running.

SOLDIER: *(to the other soldier while still running)* If we've shot someone from our own ranks, we'll be the fools again.

Alot gets up from the ground and gives a hand to Fera.

FERA: *(to Alot)* What do I do about this? If the commanders find out that these assholes killed our General with our tank, it's gonna be a mess...

ALOT: I'd like to help you, but all the pieces of the General fell on your side, so it's a Metuplebian issue. And Metuplebisians don't need help from strangers. Not even hypothetically.

FERA: I'm sure I'll have to carry the can too. They'll say: 'You could have gotten in the way of that shot. You could have helped them repair the tank...'

ALOT: I wouldn't worry about it... How could you help repair the tank if you don't have any tanks?

Fera takes a breath to answer Alot. But then he realises he has no way to answer. So he reaches into his slightly damaged booth, takes out a ruler and measures whether the distance between his and Alot's booth is still 7.6 mm.

Alot picks up the carrot he dropped in the explosion from the ground. He looks at it for a moment, then throws it at one of the soldiers and goes to his booth to check the damage.

The soldiers shrug their shoulders in confusion, pick up the pieces of the General and walk away.