

LET'S GET RID OF THE PLUMP PEOPLE!

Play in 4 acts

by PANAGIOTIS IATROU

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<http://offthewallplays.com>

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Thassos island, Greece, 2012

Characters

Andreas Efraimoglou, Minister of Foreign Affairs, 50 years old

Nikos Sideras, Andreas' consultant, 55 years old

Yiorgos Efthymiou, Andreas' consultant, 52 years old

Kostas Efraimoglou, Andreas' son, 11 years old

Marios Efraimoglou, Andreas' brother, film-maker and writer, 42 years old

Froso Efraimoglou, Andreas' and Marios' mother, pensioner, 76 years old

Pavlos Stamou, Froso's brother, pensioner, 76 years old

Anna Eleftheriou, household assistant and Froso's friend, 55 years old

Antonis Eleftheriou, Anna's son and Froso's godson, 25 years old

Dimitra Partsalou, working in the Information Services, 35 years old

Marina Efraimoglou, Andreas' wife, artist, 45 years old

Vaggelis Petrides, hotel owner, 60 years old

Niki Andreadou, the hotel owner's wife, 60 years old

Christos Andreades, restaurateur, 43 years old

Sophia Papachristou, Christos' wife, actress-educator, 35 years old

Yiannis Panayiotou, farmer, 35 years old

Alekos, Andreas' personal guard

Eleana Stamou, Pavlos' daughter, 50 years old

ACT I

SETTING: In the Minister's office. On the right side of the stage with respect to the audience, there is a large, long table that is used for meetings. A television screen is turned toward the direction of the Minister's office (the audience can see only the back side of the screen). The entrance is to the left of the stage with respect to the audience. As soon as the curtains open, we can see Andreas (dressed in suit and tie) sitting in his office and browsing newspapers – and Kostas, his little son, sitting on the meeting table, reading a school book. It's September evening. Before the curtain opens, the sound of television news is spread around:

“Following the outbreak of the bird flu, the visitors, as well as the resident citizens of the town of Mexico, who can find refuge outside the country borders or in remote districts, are fleeing the city. More than five hundred individuals have exhibited symptoms of the bird flu and are being hospitalized in critical condition, while there are twelve deceased already. Similar cases of the flu are to be found in the Caribbean islands and the Southwestern states of America. Yesterday, via its representative, the Australian government announced that the bird flu has appeared in its territory as well – mainly in the northern districts, and appealed to the governments of all countries to cooperate and offer their expertise for the preparation of a vaccine. The World Health Organization reports that the epidemic will inevitably spread around the world leaving thousands of casualties in its wake. The citizens are cautioned against close contact in enclosed spaces, but also in exterior ones, and the authorities in all countries are urged to intensify airport and border controls in order to locate carriers of the disease.”

(During the news broadcast, Kostas says loudly :)

KOSTAS

Turn the volume down, daddy! I would like to read something to you!

ANDREAS

(He disables the TV volume. While browsing a newspaper) I am listening to you, Konstantinos.

KOSTAS

(He is reading from the book) “In 2003, Bill Gates, the founder of the Microsoft Company, would win 5 cents per second. How much money would he win in 1 minute, 1 day, 1 month, 1 year?” I was wondering, isn’t it too little to win 5 cents per second?

ANDREAS

Do the required multiplications and you will find out for yourself that this is a considerable amount of money. Here is the calculator.

KOSTAS

(Complaining:) No, daddy, I will do the multiplications tomorrow - that is Saturday and I’ve got no lessons to attend! We’ve already agreed to take my Math book with me so that I keep myself busy with something here, and not in order to study properly!

ANDREAS

OK, then. Since this was our agreement, I’ve got no other choice but to keep it.
(He turns on the TV volume:)

“According to the survey conducted in all European countries and published in the leading medical journal Lancet, one out of ten European citizens are obese, while two out of ten exhibit increased chances to become obese in the future...”

(Kostas stops reading and concentrates on the news)

“In the same journal, experts include obesity in the category of diseases. As the leader of the team of the medical researchers states, an obese individual is not normal, but he is a diseased individual and he should be treated as such...”

(Kostas stands up and approaches his father so that he can have a better visual contact with the TV)

“The obese individual, he proceeds to say, is harmful to himself but primarily to the society, because his cardio-respiratory complications force him to frequently undergo medical examinations and hospitalization and this results in the depletion of insurance funds.”

KOSTAS

(He shouts out, as the above words are heard over:) Let’s get rid of the fat people!

ANDREAS

(He switches off the television) No, not the fat people, Kostantinos, it’s not right. The “plump” is a better word to use...

KOSTAS

Let’s get rid of the plump people!

ANDREAS

That’s my boy!

KOSTAS

I am rather bored here, daddy. Why don’t we leave?

ANDREAS

I have still work to do, son. I am waiting for Mr. Nikos and Mr. Yiorgos to come. After all, it was you that insisted on coming with me.

KOSTAS

Yes, but I am bored now.

ANDREAS

Would you like playing with Mr. Alekos’ gun?

KOSTAS

Wow! That would be cool!

ANDREAS

(He leaves his desk and goes toward the door. He opens it and speaks loud:)

Alekos, Konstantinos wants your gun again!

ALEKOS

(His voice is heard from outside:) Right away, Mr. Minister. Let me remove the bullets first.

ANDREAS

You should always bear this in mind. The boy's intelligence is obvious. Last time he managed to unlock the gun.

ALEKOS

It's at a very early age that a child's intelligence shows itself. There is no doubt in this.

ANDREAS

Is it ready?

ALEKOS

(Who now seems somehow). Totally. (He hands in the gun). Here you are. I would only like to ask something from you.

ANDREAS

It's about that unfortunate brother of yours that lives back in the village, isn't it? I would like to remind you of the salary costs.

ALEKOS

No, not that. If only you could call me "Alexandros." It seems to me that "Alekos" is too old-fashioned and it feels diminishing.

KOSTAS

Daddy, when will I finally get that gun?

ANDREAS

(Ostensibly austere) Konstantinos, I have repeatedly told you that it is not proper to interrupt other people's conversation. What you should do is wait until their discussion is over, and then talk. (To Alekos) Alright Alekos – I meant Alexandros. From now on I will call you Alexandros. Forgive me if I am forgetful sometimes.

ALEKOS

Thank you very much, Mr. Minister. I apologize for disturbing you. (He leaves the room)

ANDREAS

Here is the gun, Konstantinos.

KOSTAS

Thanks, dad.

(Andreas closes the door. He returns to his desk and he takes up browsing the newspapers again. Konstantinos is holding the gun in his two hands and targets here and there, repeating "bam, bam, bam, let's get rid of the plump people". There is a knock on the door. Andreas' consultants, i.e. Nikos Sideras and Yiorgos Efthymiou, appear. Both wear suits and ties and are holding briefcases.)

NIKOS

Good afternoon, sir. Ha! Little Kostas is here as well! – How are you doing little Kostas?

YIORGOS

Good afternoon, sir.

ANDREAS

(rising) It is Konstantinos, Mr. Sideras, Konstantinos, not little Kostas...

KOSTAS

(Pointing the gun at Nikos) Bam, bam, let's get rid of the plump people!

NIKOS

(Laughing) That's nice. Quite rebellious, I would say.

YIORGOS

(Laughing) But we don't belong to the plump ones, Konstantinos, do we?

NIKOS

(Searching the pockets of his jacket) I think I might have something for you, Konstantinos. Here you are. A nice bar of chocolate.

ANDREAS

(He rushes and grabs it before Kostas gets hold of it) What is it that you are doing, Mr. Sideras? Are you offering a bar of chocolate to an 11-year-old child? That is criminal!

YIORGOS

That's quite an issue. A bar of chocolate to an 11-year-old child.

ANDREAS

(To Nikos) I am often under the impression that you are incapable of shaking off conceptions of the past. Konstantinos, please tell us your opinion about chocolate.

KOSTAS

(As if delivering a speech by heart) Chocolate causes the teeth to decay, and the body as well.

ANDREAS

(To Nikos) Did you listen to that? Children have become wiser than adults. Here, take your chocolate back.

NIKOS

(He takes the chocolate and puts it into his pocket. To Andreas:). I apologize. I have to admit that I sometimes act on impulse.

YIORGOS

That's quite unacceptable for everyday life, but mainly for politics.

(Nikos and Yiorgos go to the meeting table. They lay their briefcases, open them and take various documents out.)

ANDREAS

Konstantinos, would you like to go to Mr. Alekos and let him teach you some more secrets about guns?

KOSTAS

Wow! That would be great!

ANDREAS

(He goes to the door and opens it. He speaks loudly) Konstantinos would like to keep you company, Alexandros.

ALEKOS

(From outside) By all means, Mr. Minister. It is always a pleasure to be in company of Konstantinos, and there is always something to learn from him.

ANDREAS

Come on, Konstantinos. Did you listen to that? Mr. Alexandros is waiting for you.

(Kostas leaves the room holding the gun)

ANDREAS

As we have already agreed, Alexandros. Be cautious with the gun.

ALEKOS

(From outside) Don't worry, Mr. Minister.

ANDREAS

(He closes the door) This fellow is totally foolish. The other time he forgot to unload the gun. At another time still, during my visit to the mall, he attacked a poor man who only tried to give me a handshake. I have to replace him. He is becoming dangerous.

NIKOS

(He pulls loose the knot of the tie. He stands, as he examines some documents) Do you mind turning on the air-conditioning for a while, Mr. Efraimoglou? It is really hot in here.

ANDREAS

(He looks at the walls) It is better that we don't, Mr. Sideras. Air-cinditioning causes rheumatisms.

YIORGOS

(He stands as he examines some documents) The climate has changed. September is drawing to a close and the city of Athens is still suffering under scorching heat.

NIKOS

Yes, that is right. The climate has totally changed. A friend of mine told me that the two cherry trees in his garden blossom in November, as well.

YIORGOS

I have read somewhere that the Maldives and the Seychelles will be covered by sea water in no more than two years.

NIKOS

The climate has changed. Scientists have been drawing attention to this for some time now. (He notices Kostas' book on the table) Fifth-grade math. Is Kostas good at math, Mr. Efraimoglou?

ANDREAS

Excellent, I would say. I am really glad that he is growing up to be a rational human being.

YIORGOS

What is it that you are observing, sir?

ANDREAS

Don't you think that something is missing here? The walls are totally empty.

NIKOS

(As he takes a seat) You should have some paintings. They will add to the beauty of the room.

YIORGOS

(As he takes a seat) Well, of course. You should have done this long ago.

ANDREAS

Four of them will do. Two of them here (pointing toward the audience's direction), one there (pointing to the wall opposite to the meeting table), and one there (pointing to the wall behind the meeting table). I think 100.000euro will suffice.

YIORGOS

Maybe more. Famous painters sell their works quite expensively.

ANDREAS

(To Yiorgos) Which famous painters are you referring to, Mr. Efthymiou? It is of the young artists, the young talents that we should be supportive of. It is they that need our help in order to fulfill their dreams.

NIKOS

You speak to the point, Mr. Efraimoglou. Do you have any one specific in mind?

ANDREAS

My wife, of course.

NIKOS

What an idiot! How come I did not think of it? A great talent, indeed! I have seen her works on the internet. The comments cited by both critics and art lovers are highly praising.

YIORGOS

(He shakes his head right-left. He repeats the gesture. To Nikos) Mrs. Marina certainly possesses a great talent. Her works partake of both surrealism and expressionism, and belong to the tradition of both Kandisky and Giorgio de Kiriko. It takes a brilliant mind for such a style to be cultivated.

ANDREAS

(Very satisfied) I am happy that you agree with me. I would like to thank you for your nice comments. I will let her know.

(Pause)

ANDREAS

(He takes a seat and joins the others) So, what is there for today?

NIKOS

First of all, Mr. Minister, it is time that we organize that general meeting. It has been almost a year since we decided it, and nothing has been done toward that direction.

ANDREAS

What general meeting?

NIKOS

The general meeting for the re-orientation of our foreign policy, the one in which members of the diplomatic corps and the academia are supposed to participate.

ANDREAS

And why is it that our foreign policy should change?

NIKOS

This is because the world, the global system and the power relations have undergone significant change. It is not wise to follow the same tactics when the space in which you use it has changed dramatically.

YIORGOS

(To Andreas) Our foreign policy has been the same since World War II, except for some minor modifications. In the meantime, the geostrategic significance of our country is continuously degrading. This would entail disastrous implications.

ANDREAS

Greece never dies, sirs, never. How is the other case progressing?

NIKOS

Which case, sir?

ANDREAS

That of our editor.

YIORGOS

It proceeds in a very satisfactory manner, just as planned.

ANDREAS

Has he received the money?

NIKOS

(He points to his briefcase that is lying on the table) Two full briefcases like this one here.

YIORGOS

(To Andreas) The first poll is being published next week. We've agreed that you will marginally precede the Prime Minister so as not to give cause for suspicions.

NIKOS

Everything is contingent upon our winning or losing the elections.

YIORGOS

According to surveys, we are bound to lose the elections.

NIKOS

In all probability, we are. Nonetheless, we should not give up. Methodical and discreet movements are necessary.

ANDREAS

The mechanism that I have set up is extremely productive.

NIKOS

Good. So, we lose the elections, then we make it to the party conference and you get to be elected as the leader.

YIORGOS

(To Andreas) In the next elections, with the help of international allies, it is you that will become the Prime Minister, the next leader of the country.

ANDREAS

I feel anxious...

YIORGOS

You needn't, Mr. Efraimoglou. Everything is going to turn out well.

(Pause)

NIKOS

(He stands up and rubs his knee with a pain grimace)

ANDREAS

(To Nikos) Is there something wrong?

NIKOS

Sometimes it is hard to tolerate pain.

ANDREAS

You should change your nutrition.

YIORGOS

Every pain originates in wrong nutritional habits. If you are a meat-eater...

NIKOS

(Angrily.To Yiorgos) Me, a meat-eater? You must be joking!

YIORGOS

(To Nikos) Can you recall what it was that you ordered the last time we had lunch together?

NIKOS

(As he takes a seat) What was it?

YIORGOS

I contented myself with salads, while you ordered pork with some kind of sauce.

ANDREAS

(To Nikos) And do not forget the chocolate.

NIKOS(Regretfully) Yes, yes, you are right. I have to pay closer attention to my nutrition.

(Pause)

ANDREAS

Well, let's move on. What else is there on schedule for today?

YIORGOS

(He shuffles his papers) We should discuss the preparation of your meeting with the Minister of Foreign Affairs of the Republic of Sudan.

ANDREAS

What is going on down there? Is the South pursuing independence?

YIORGOS

A plebiscite is going to take place in January.

ANDREAS

I have been to Nairobi during my service as a Minister of Commerce.

NIKOS

Nairobi is the capital city of Kenya, Mr. Efraimoglou.

ANDREAS

Is it? Then, Kenya borders Soudan.

NIKOS

(He searches through his papers) Yes, here is the map. They do share borders over a limited area.

ANDREAS

See? I tend to confuse the capital cities of neighbouring countries.

YIORGOS

(To Andreas) Your meeting with the Sudan Minister is scheduled for Monday. So, please, pay attention for a while. There is not much time left. The purpose of his visit

is to make sure that we do not acknowledge the southern state in case that the plebiscite proves positive.

NIKOS

This is in fact quite difficult to achieve, because the government of Khartoum has already resorted to unfair tactics. They resort to funny excuses for not allowing the citizens to register in the voting catalogues, while also obliging entire populations to move from the south to the north. Bullying, in short.

YIORGOS

It is our firm belief that you should grant their requirements since the companies which are actively engaged in these areas are also not benefited by secession. It is in the southern regions that the greater deposits of gold and oil are located. Let us bear in mind also that the leaders of the tribes hold an inimical attitude toward the rights of the companies to exploit the region.

ANDREAS

Which are the engaging forces in Soudan?

NIKOS

All of them. Americans, French, Germans, Russians, Chinese. On the other hand, Egypt and Libya pursue their own vital interests.

YIORGOS

Therefore we will grant them their requirements and in exchange we will ask to get cheap supplies of oil.

ANDREAS

This runs counter to the principles of competition.

NIKOS

(To Andreas) It goes without saying that our agreement will be held secret.

ANDREAS

(In a decisive manner) I refuse to play games at the expense of our American and European allies.

YIORGOS

(To Andreas) But, we should not give something in exchange of nothing. We will be thought of as idiots.

ANDREAS

(Pensively) Allright, then. Let it be as you suggest. Although I discern a degree of risk, let it be as you say. (He stands up and approaches his desk) And now, let us move to a persisting and critical matter.

NIKOS

(He rises. He rubs his knee) It feels better. The more I sit, the more it hurts. (To Yiorgos) Do you think it might be something serious?

YIORGOS

Why don't you have it examined?

ANDREAS

(He leaves on the table in front of the others the newspaper he got from his desk) Do you see this?

YIORGOS

(He reads) I know. Your brother's new adventures.

NIKOS

We've read the papers.

ANDREAS

(To Nikos) You have, but you haven't touched upon this issue. We have been wasting our time with the Sudanese and their problems.

YIORGOS

You are wrong, sir. We've been concerned about this, and, in fact, we've already had a brief discussion.

NIKOS

(He reads the newspaper) There is a reference here regarding the window breaking of the central offices of the party. Marios is positively identified. I wonder why he hasn't been arrested yet.

ANDREAS

Do you, Mr. Sideras? Don't you live in this country?

YIORGOS

Everyone but him has been arrested.

ANDREAS

This is because he is the Minister's brother. In this case, everything is tolerated, even terrorism.

YIORGOS

(He stands up. He runs through the newspaper. He reads slowly) "Artists against fraud." How now!

ANDREAS

Indeed. And they destroy people's property. For, the offices of the party are the people's property, since they have been made out of the money of taxed people. They have allied themselves with the workers, those irresponsible ones that have turned the city center into a battleground, because we have reduced salaries and pensions a little. How else can we overcome the financial crisis, increase the competitiveness of the country and enter the international market so that we are reliable enough to borrow money again? The terrorists. They place their personal interest over that of the country.

YIORGOS

They are unable to grasp reality, Mr. Efraimoglou.

NIKOS

Actually, they cannot see beyond their nose. Otherwise, they would see the new, shining era that is dawning for all of us.

(From now on no one of them sits, but all three move on the stage)

ANDREAS

Anyway. There are no dead-ends in democracy. Upheavals will come to an end, structural changes will progress and the country will regain its reliability. But, what about my brother? How inappropriate to encounter the Minister's brother on TV doing this or that. The newspapers also write about him all the time. But, as a politician, I get slandered and vilified. It is with great effort that I have managed to build an acceptable public image. And, now there he comes to ruin it.

NIKOS

(To Andreas) The political cost of your brother's conduct, and everything that it entails, is huge for you. That's why we shouldn't give up our efforts, but rather reformulate our plans so that we expedite the result.

YIORGOS

(He continues to shake his head) We need something more radical.

ANDREAS

I cannot see the result, Mr. Efthymiou, the result. And stop shaking your head at last! You make me nervous!

YIORGOS

I apologize, but I cannot control it.

NIKOS

Cervical syndrome. (To Yiorgos) And it is me that you accuse of wrong nutrition.

YIORGOS

Don't be hasty, Mr. Efraimoglou. Physical extermination can come quite easily. Moral extermination, on the other hand, needs time. Unless you prefer physical extermination.

NIKOS

Avoid this kind of suggestions, Mr. Efthymiou. It is his brother we are talking about, after all.

YIORGOS

(To Nikos) I am reminding you of the following: "There is permanent conflict between the necessities of political action and the precepts of morality."

NIKOS

(In admiration) Machiavelli. That sacred genius...

YIORGOS

(To Nikos) And something else: "You should either cajole or exterminate people."

(To Andreas) An accident will suffice. It will certainly cross the mind of several people that it might not have been an accident, but they will keep it to themselves. Who is it that could run counter to public opinion?

NIKOS

(To Andreas) Even if they admit this publicly, no one is going to believe them. They will be thought of as insane. Your image does not leave any room for such views.

ANDREAS

(Pensive) No, no, I reject this, I totally reject this.

(Pause)

YIORGOS

When will your brother be informed that he is not going to get the chair in the department of Cinema Studies, Mr. Efraimoglou?

ANDREAS

In April? May? I am not really sure. I wonder why they have published the vacancy notice, since the position is reserved for a supporter of the party.

NIKOS

In any case, Marios is highly qualified. I've seen his CV.

ANDREAS

That's why he is certain that he is going to be employed. After all, he is in great need of the job. His financial situation is really bad. But we will not allow the terrorists to invade the domain of the academic teaching stuff.

YIORGOS

(Pensively) And if something bad happens to him, along with the preceding events, it will cause him to shake, bend and be intimidated.

ANDREAS

As you have already suggested more than once, our purpose is to cause fear to overcome him. After all, the people as well are easily governed and totally under control, when under fear.

NIKOS

Do you have anything in mind, Mr. Efthymiou? You always conceive something. I admit that you are inventive and I acknowledge your talent. There must be something wrong with me. It is as if my mind has stuck recently.

YIORGOS

(Pensively) Yes, I actually have something in mind. (To Andreas) Marios is not in a relationship currently, is he?

ANDREAS

As far as I know, he has been single for the last few months.

YIORGOS

That's good. So, listen to me carefully. We find a woman of his liking and have her approach him. Her intentions are clear: She wants him in her bedroom. Sensitive and unrealistic as he is, Marios will succumb to her, and will soon get in love. Soon then, and after he has learned the bad news regarding the university, she dumps him without providing any explanations. It will be just too difficult for him to handle two such unexpected strokes within a short time.

NIKOS

That's absolutely correct. And he will find himself one step before the edge of the cliff. The emptiness underneath causes terror. It's the sense of the impending fall, rather than the fall per se, that triggers fear. Well done, Mr Efthymiou. It's a brilliant idea.

ANDREAS

(To Yiorgos) I have to admit that it is a great idea. I congratulate you.

YIORGOS

The accumulation of so many negative incidents confuses the intellect, kills hope and the picture of a dead-end world, a world without prospect, dominates the mind. The individual quits and withdraws to the dark side of his own self. And don't forget the rest of the things we have done to him: his film received no acknowledgement and his play no distinction.

ANDREAS

The head of the critics refused to obey and dared to threaten me with impeachment. It was after he had learned that he will be excluded from the sponsorship that he started begging. And he certainly consented to our wish. It is incredible what is going on here: Even the last employee thinks of himself as possessing a power equal to that of a Prime Minister.

NIKOS

I suggest that we put the idea into practice.

YIORGOS

I am acquainted with a woman that fits our project. She works in the Information Service, and I think that she is perfect for our cause. She is attractive and witty, around the age of 35. I bet she is the type of woman that Marios wants. And most importantly, she is obsessed with taking revenge on men.

ANDREAS

(With satisfaction) And see how the whole thing can bind up: My mother's name day is tomorrow, namely St. Efrosyni's day.

NIKOS

(Enthusiastically) What a wonderful coincidence! They can meet each other there.

ANDREAS

They certainly can! Marios is definitely going to be there. (To Yiorgos) You are coming as well, Mr. Efthymiou. With her. We will introduce her as...I don't know... What do you suggest?

NIKOS

We could introduce her as your new secretary that would like to meet your family. You are expecting a new secretary, after all.

ANDREAS

That's not a very original idea. And when the real one comes, what kind of explanation am I going to offer to my wife?

YIORGOS

(Who continues to nod his head) We will come up with something until then, sir.

NIKOS

Yes, we will certainly come up with something until then.

ANDREAS

Good, then. (To Yiorgos) In that case, you should hurry up.

NIKOS

(To Yiorgos) Yes, you should move fast. We have no time in our hands.

ANDREAS

(To Yiorgos) Give her clear instructions about her role. And tell her that for this mission, and as long as this affair with Marios continues, she will be paid thrice her salary. I will arrange it with the Head of the Information Service.

NIKOS

(To Yiorgos) It is absolutely important that you describe to her Marios' character. You will make it easier for her to organize her tactics.

ANDREAS

Mr. Efthymiou, I've already asked you to stop moving your head from side to side. I get irritated.

NIKOS

It is cervical syndrome. Irrespective of what he claims, his nutrition is not the proper one.

YIORGOS

(He lowers the head and whines) I am not well. I feel really awful. My wife left me yesterday. She took the kids with her, as well.

KOSTAS

(He opens the door) When are we going to leave, daddy? I have got bored with Mr. Alexandros all this time!

END OF ACT I

ACT II

SETTING: Balcony, on the fifth floor. The audience faces the façade of the apartment with its three doors. The door that is on the right side of the audience, where the dining room is, is widely open, with the curtains remaining closed throughout the whole of ACT II. The others doors remain closed. Rather than dragging the curtain, the characters sweep it aside in order to appear on the balcony – the interior space of the flat and the characters inside it cannot be seen by the audience. In the balcony, there is a large table with chairs surrounding it and a couple of comfortable armchairs, fit for outdoor spaces. Some flowerpots are placed on both sides of the stage. Urban noises. The day after ACT I. Noon. When the curtain rises, we see Kostas sitting on the table and reading a school book. Antonis, Anna and Froso are inside the house. Before the curtain rises, the sound of TV news from the dining room is heard:

“The melting of giant ice caps of Greenland and the Antarctic due to the temperature increase, for which the human factor holds the exclusive responsibility, will cause the ocean levels to rise as high as two meters until 2100, an increase that will set coastal regions around the globe in grave danger. According to the scientists’ estimations...”

KOSTAS

(He speaks loudly) Mr. Antonis!

“...the rise of the sea level may exceed 1.8 meters, which would cause thousands of acres of shoreline to be submerged below the water and which would in turn cause millions of people to be displaced. Scientists argue that the rise of the sea level as little as one meter would flood low-lying areas in many countries, making some parts uninhabitable. This would result in extreme floods in coastal areas...”

ANNA

(She speaks loudly from inside) The baking pan is ready, Mrs. Froso. Shall I put it in the oven?

FROSO

(She speaks loudly from inside) Just a moment. I am coming.

“...with dramatic implications for the economies of these countries.”

“A strong explosion of a time bomb occurred in the morning in front of the Administrative Court of Athens, causing serious damage to the building, the adjoining apartments and four parked cars. The time bomb had been placed on a stolen motorcycle that was parked outside the Court. The explosion was preceded by an anonymous warning phone call to a television station and the offices of a newspaper. The Minister of Justice and the Deputy Prime Minister arrived in the area, which only a while ago remained blocked. The news...”

KOSTAS

(He speaks loudly) Mr. Antonis!

“...has travelled around the world since this morning.”

ANTONIS

(He switches off the TV. He speaks loudly from inside, irritated) What’s all that shouting about?

KOSTAS

Could you come outside for a moment? I’d like to ask you a question.

ANTONIS

(He comes on the stage. He is dressed in black) I apologize for talking to you like that. What is it that you’d like to ask me?

KOSTAS

Listen to what is in the History book of my class. (He quotes)

“Justinian’s reforms annoyed privileged classes, who rioted and caused turbulence in the city. Empress Theodora supported Justinian and convinced him not to give in. The imperial guard drowned the Nika riots in blood. How do you judge Theodora’s advice to Justinian. Was it effective?” (To Antonis) What do you think?

ANTONIS

What's the point of asking this question? He relieved the city of the terrorists.

KOSTAS

I am glad that you agree with me.

ANTONIS

(He observes the table surface) Look at those flies. And it's almost October. This is not normal. (He fetches a flyswatter that lies on an armchair)

KOSTAS

Flies cause microbes to disseminate. Do you think we might catch an infection?

ANTONIS

And what about this hot weather? How hot can it be? We've lost track of the seasons. I am firmly convinced that all these are presages.

(The doorbell is heard. Kostas is studying. Antonis is killing flies. Pavlos enters)

PAVLOS

(From inside) Happy Name's Day, dear sister. I wish you a long, healthy and happy life, and all these things that people wish in situations like this. I've brought you the book you asked me for. Here you are. I hope you enjoy it.

KOSTAS

Mr. Pavlos is here.

FROSO

(From inside) Thank you very much, Pavlos.

PAVLOS

(From inside) Nobody else has come yet. I am the first to come, aren't I?

FROSO

(From inside) Antonis and Kostantinos are outside.

PAVLOS

(From inside) I will sit outside too. It's a nice day today. Could you bring me a glass of water, please? I am quite thirsty and I also need to take my pill.

ANTONIS

(He hits with the flyswatter) I've killed four of those dirty flies already.

PAVLOS

(He comes on the stage. He is holding a newspaper) Hello there to the youth, the future of Greece.

ANTONIS

(He goes on chasing flies) There is no future, Mr. Stamos.

PAVLOS

That's an unacceptable thing to say, my dear. A 25-year-old young man should not talk like that.

ANTONIS

Earth will be destroyed in two years' time. How can there be any future?

KOSTAS

Really? Is this so?

ANTONIS

According to scientists, it is.

PAVLOS

Oh, dear Lord! How many nonsense ideas have I come across lately?

ANNA

(She comes on the stage holding a glass of water) Good morning, Mr. Pavlos. How are you?

PAVLOS

Good morning, my dear Anna.

ANNA

Here is the glass of water you have asked for.

PAVLOS

Oh yes, I nearly forgot about it. (He leaves the newspaper on the table and takes the glass in his hands)

ANNA

In a while you will have to come inside to give me a hand, Antonis.

ANTONIS

Leave me alone, I can't. I am bored.

ANNA

My son is always bored, always bored. (She goes inside)

KOSTAS

(He stands up holding the book) I am going inside to play with my Nintendo. I'm bored of studying History. Dad is right calling it a useless thing. (He goes inside)

(Pause. Pavlos swallows his pill and then he sits on one of the armchairs. Antonis is holding the flyswatter and sits on the table)

ANTONIS

So, you don't believe that the earth will be destroyed, do you?

PAVLOS

I am too old to believe in such nonsense, young man.

ANTONIS

Yet, these are scientific theories, not mere rumours. Let me explain. Within the next two years, the planets will come to an alignment. I suppose you are aware of the fact that planets exercise gravitational pull to each other. As a result, when all planets align, the gravitational forces that will develop will be so great that the earth will not be able to resist and it will explode. As you can see for yourself, these are scientifically substantiated theories, and not just simple individuals' views.

PAVLOS

If only I were your age, my dear. I wouldn't care the least about such assumptions. Go out, enjoy the day, hang out with your friends, get to know the world: in one word, live your life. Unfortunately, I did none of these. I've spent my whole life in an office, trapped in a job that offered no opportunity for initiative and creativity. I've been nothing but a little robot, programmed to execute the orders of people that had no idea of the subject in question.

ANTONIS

(He kills a fly on the table) I got you! It's the fifth one. And how shall I get out, Mr. Pavlos? Everything is too expensive. A cup of coffee costs four euro. And if you'd like to eat out, then fifty euro won't be enough.

PAVLOS

Money shouldn't be a problem, should it? Children, my dear, should construct toys by themselves, when they want to play.

FROSO

(She appears on stage) What are you two talking about?

ANNA

(She calls from inside the house) Antonis, come in the kitchen. I'd like some help here.

ANTONIS

(He stands up. He leaves the flyswatter on the table) Oh, that woman will never leave me alone! (He gets inside)

PAVLOS

(To Froso) Did you get it, my dear? A 25-year-old young man, with life blossoming upon him, and he spends his time considering the end of the world. If only I were as young as he is...

FROSO

I forgot to tell you that Andreas' new secretary is joining us. She would like to meet us, she says.

PAVLOS

That's nice. We are meeting someone new on your name day. Everything else remains the same. Vaggelis, Niki and Marina, who will probably offer you one of her paintings again, a masterpiece just like the others – and so on.

FROSO

Did you know that she won another award? She received one from the Metropolitan himself.

PAVLOS

Too many awards for this young lady, too many.

ANTONIS

(He comes on the stage. Upset. To Froso) Godmother, please tell her not to make me do housework that I don't know how to. Am I supposed to know how to grade cheese? What do I have to do with all these?

FROSO

Allright, I'll go inside. (She gets inside)

ANTONIS

(He fetches the flyswatter. To Pavlos) See? She insists that I help with the housework because I am unemployed. But I know nothing about sweeping, dish washing and the like. Please convince Mr. Andreas to help me. If only I could get a job in the public sector, then nobody could move me.

KOSTAS

(He is calling from inside) Grandma, when are mum and dad coming? Why are they so late?

FROSO

(She is calling from inside) They are coming, my dear. They are on their way.

(The doorbell is ringing)

KOSTAS

(From inside) It must be them!

PAVLOS

(He looks at his watch) Either I have come early, or the rest of them are late.

(Marios enters the house)

MARIOS

(From inside) Happy name day, mother.

FROSO

(From inside) Thank you, my child.

ANTONIS

(He approaches Pavlos. Quietly) You know, Mr. Marios is not a terrorist – how could he be after all?

MARIOS

(From inside) How are you Konstantinos?

ANTONIS

(Quietly. To Pavlos) He does everything on purpose, so that people are convinced that Mr. Andreas holds a populist attitude. People are unable to think. They believe that since his brother is like that, so is he.

MARIOS

(He comes on the stage) Good morning, uncle. Hello Antonis.

ANTONIS

Good morning, Mr. Marios.

PAVLOS

You're late, son.

MARIOS

How are you doing, uncle?

PAVLOS

Antonis was just saying...

ANTONIS

(He interrupts him) Mr. Pavlos!

PAVLOS

...that it is a matter of time for earth to be destroyed.

MARIOS

Let it be. In fact, this may be the only solution.

ANTONIS

(To Pavlos) See? Only you haven't heard of anything. (To Marios) It is about the alignments of the planets. Let me explain...

ANNA

(From inside. She interrupts him) Antonis!

ANTONIS

(Irritated) Here we go again...

ANNA

(From inside) Ask Mr. Marios what he would like to drink.

MARIOS

(To Antonis) You could bring me a glass of orange juice, if it's not too much of a trouble.

ANTONIS

That's the best choice. Oranges offer a lot of vitamins. (He leaves the flyswatter somewhere and goes inside)

PAVLOS

(He stands up) You seem moody, Marios, don't you?

MARIOS

(As he is having a look at the newspaper that lies on the table) I am not really well today, uncle. My heart aches. Have a look at the front page. They blame the owners of gas stations for the rise in the price of the fuels.

PAVLOS

(He heads toward the edge of the balcony, toward the audience) Yet, they too act illegally...

MARIOS

They say nothing about the taxes that have been imposed over the last three years. Did you know that taxes make up 60% of the gas price?

PAVLOS

(He looks down at the city) The city of Athens looks very ugly from up here. Just cement, no provision for free spaces and green areas. And these antennas on the terraces are only too ugly.

ANTONIS

(He appears on the stage. To Marios) Here is your juice.

MARIOS

Thank you very much, Antonis. (He is reading the newspaper)

(The doorbell rings)

PAVLOS

They have finally arrived.

ANTONIS

(He takes the flyswatter) Look at all those flies. And how hot it is! This is not a normal situation. (He is looking for flies)

(Andreas, Marina, Yiorgos and Dimitra enter. Wishes, thanks and the like are heard from inside)

KOSTAS

(From inside) Why have you been so late, mum?

ANDREAS

(From inside) Mother, let me introduce Miss Dimitra Partsalou, my new secretary.

MARINA

(From inside) Have you been a good boy, Konstantinos?

FROSO

(From inside) It's a pleasure to meet you.

PAVLOS

Here is the newcomer.

ANTONIS

(He hits with the flyswatter) Dirty fly!

MARINA

(From inside) Let me remove the wrapping so that you can see it, Mrs. Efrosyni.

PAVLOS

Here is the new masterpiece, as well.

MARINA

(From inside) Isn't it a masterpiece?

(Everyone agrees – “very good,” “really nice,” “excellent,” and so on)

YIORGOS

(From inside) Is Marios here?

PAVLOS

(To Marios) Why is Efthymiou so interested in you? Have you been hanging out together lately?

MARIOS

(Reading the newspaper) Of course not. It's been months since I last met him.

ANTONIS

Should we use insecticide?

(All four of them appear on the balcony. They greet each other. Andreas introduces Dimitra to the rest)

ANDREAS

And here is my brother, Marios.

DIMITRA

(She offers her hand for a handshake. Warmly) I am really happy to meet you in person. I have to admit that I am particularly fond of you.

MARIOS

(He shakes hands with her) Nice to meet you too.

ANDREAS

(To Dimitra) My brother is courageous enough to speak his mind, which is I think what makes him likeable. He does not hide his thoughts.

YIORGOS

And he pursues the unattainable.

ANDREAS

Indeed. Whereas in politics the unattainable does not exist.

YIORGOS

Politics is after all the art of the possible.

ANTONIS

(He is looking all around) Don't you think we should use insecticide?

MARINA

Are there many flies, Mr. Antonis?

ANTONIS

Many, Mrs. Marina, too many.

MARINA

(Upset) We should go inside, then.

MARIOS

It's a beautiful day today.

YIORGOS

(To Marios) I wouldn't say that myself. An abnormal situation is not nice. And that hot weather is not normal.

ANDREAS

We have entered a period of climatic change.

ANTONIS

(He hits with a flyswatter) Dirty fly!

PAVLOS

(To Antonis) That's enough with the flies, my dear. Why don't you go inside and give your mother a hand?

ANTONIS

(To Pavlos) Yes, you are right. I shouldn't make a trouble of myself. (He goes inside holding the flyswatter)

PAVLOS

He has driven me insane. It is since I've arrived that he has been occupying himself with the flies.

ANDREAS

Marina, why don't you bring that painting of yours, so that Marios can have a look at it? I am curious to hear what he has to say.

MARINA

Marios is always harsh in his judgment. (She gets inside)

DIMITRA

(She is looking at him) He must have his own view of things, that's why.

(Pause)

MARINA

(She enters holding the painting. She shows it) Here you are.

FROSO

(She comes on the stage) Why don't you sit down? Please, have a seat, Miss Dimitra.

(One by one, they take a seat, except for Marios and Marina)

MARIOS

(He examines the painting) Why have you used such intensely bold colours?

MARINA

I wished to capture the alterations of the present, that is the rationale behind my choice of colours. Bright red stands for cheerfulness, the feeling of happiness which comes with the advent of a new era. Were it a sound, orange-like red would be the sound of the bell that invites to the vesper service, and expresses grief, the grief that the end of a day entails – and, generally, the grief that comes with the end of a period of any kind.

ANDREAS

She talks so nice.

PAVLOS

(He observes the painting) I myself find a kind of exaggeration, as well.

ANDREAS

You have no idea about art, my uncle.

YIORGOS

I disagree. What we have before us is a work of art, something novel, something pioneering.

MARINA

Exactly. It is new art, what I am doing. And since art is a form of language, this new art will have to constitute the language of a new intellectuality.

(Anna and Antonis appear on the stage. Anna is holding a tray with glasses of juice and Antonis a tray with glasses of water)

FROSO

Anna, let me introduce you to Miss Dimitra, Andreas' new secretary.

ANNA

(As she leaves the tray on the table) Nice to meet you, madam.

DIMITRA

Nice to meet you too, Anna. (To Marios. She stares at him) Why are you silent, Mr. Marios? I would very much like to hear your views on art.

ANTONIS

(As he leaves the tray on the table) Those who know, never speak. (To himself) I must have read this somewhere...

MARINA

I was wondering, Mr. Antonis, why are you always dressed in black? Do you intend to show something by this?

ANTONIS

No. I just like black clothes.

MARINA

And yet, there must be something that you want to show. Each one of our actions originates in our subconscious.

ANTONIS

(To Marina) Now that you mention it, I might wish to allude to the imminent destruction of our planet.

MARINA

(To Antonis) See? Black colour is a silence without future or hope. (She takes the painting and goes inside)

ANNA

Mrs. Froso, shall we start laying the table?

FROSO

Not before Mr. Petrides arrives.

ANNA

They always come late. (She gets inside)

MARINA

(From inside) Konstantinos, my dear, are you having a good time?

KOSTAS

(From inside) Yes, mum.

YIORGOS

(To Andreas) How about drinking a glass of whisky before lunch, Mr. Efraimoglou?

ANDREAS

Good idea.

ANTONIS

I'll serve you. (He gets inside)

MARIOS

You'll have to excuse me. I am going inside for a while.

DIMITRA

(She stands up) I'm going inside too. It's really hot out here.

PAVLOS

(To Dimitra) Maybe you need to change seat, so that you don't sit under the sun.

(Marios and Dimitra go inside)

FROSO

I was really sorry to hear that your wife left you, Mr. Efraimoglou.

(The doorbell rings)

FROSO

(She stands up) That must be Mr. Petrides. (She gets inside)

PAVLOS

(To Yiorgos) Has your wife left you?

YIORGOS

(He lowers his head and whines) Not only that. She has also taken the children with her.

ANDREAS

That's difficult for a man to bear.

(Vaggelis Petrides and Niki Petridou enter. Wishes and the like are heard from inside)

YIORGOS

And I don't know where they are. I've looked for them, but nothing.

PAVLOS

(To Yiorgos) And what are you planning to do?

(Antonis comes on the stage. He is holding a tray with two glasses of whisky and ice cubes. He leaves them on the table)

YIORGOS

(To Pavlos) What can I do? I don't know. I feel lost. If only I could see my children.

ANTONIS

Here you are. I've brought the ice separately. (He goes inside)

NIKI

(From inside) Won't you introduce us to this lady, Mr. Marios?

PAVLOS

(To Yiorgos) That's awful, dear, just awful.

MARIOS

(From inside) This is Miss Partsalou, my brother's new secretary.

PAVLOS

It's awful to live all alone.

NIKI

(From inside) You look pretty, Miss, really pretty.

PAVLOS

There is nothing worse than loneliness.

VAGGELIS

(From inside) Konstantinos, how are you?

PAVLOS

(To Yiorgos) Can you possibly imagine how I am coping since I lost my wife?

ANDREAS

How is Eleana doing, uncle? She used to give us a call now and then.

PAVLOS

My little girl is well. She has become a permanent resident of Berlin. I wish she is well.

ANDREAS

I've missed her. We grew up together.

VAGGELIS

(He comes on the stage) Good morning to everyone.

(Everyone greets back)

NIKI

(She comes on the stage. She is holding a bag) It's really hot. I have to confess that I have a sense of fear. (Sighing) Oh, dear Lord...

VAGGELIS

My respects, Mr. Minister. By the way, the government's initiative to reduce VAT in hotel accommodation was really good. It will foster development. And it is only by means of development that deficits and debts can be minimized.

ANDREAS

Our government is always trying for the best, Mr. Petrides.

YIORGOS

Growth, productivity, competitiveness. These are the keys to progress.

VAGGELIS

(To Andreas) If only you could stop issuing VISA cards for the Russians, just like you did with Serbians, we would be grateful. Russia is a vast market. We are immersed in debts, and we need to find a way out.

ANDREAS

Everything will take its course, Mr. Petrides.

PAVLOS

Tourism is the heavy industry of our country. But visitors are bound to lose their attraction to us because of such high prices.

VAGGELIS

What's the time?

PAVLOS

(He looks at his watch) It's almost half past one. You have been late.

NIKI

(She leaves her bag on the table, opens it and draws out two bags from the pharmacy)
What can we do, Mr. Pavlos? We are always up to something. Oh, dear Lord...

PAVLOS

If only I could bring back the time, I would do nothing in my life. I would wander, with no permanent job, no permanent residence. I would just observe the world; I'd travel, discover beautiful places and let myself cry because of the beauty revealed to me.

ANDREAS

A vagabond, uncle?

YIORGOS

(To Pavlos) A parasite of society?

PAVLOS

(To Yiorgos. Angrily) You have no right to talk to me like that. Don't challenge me.

(Pause)

VAGELLIS

What's the time?

NIKI

(She offers one of the bags to Vaggelis) It's time for our pills, Vaggelis.

PAVLOS

Are all these pills?

NIKI

(She is searching the bag, just like Vaggelis, and both pull out a box and a little pill out of the box) Pills, Mr. Pavlos, pills. For cholesterol, triglycerides, hypertension, diabetes. But what do you expect? Everything is contaminated. Oh, dear Lord...

VAGGELIS

All produce is polluted and genetically modified. Did you know that pigs have been injected with mice's genes?

YIORGOS

Have you learned what happened in Arizona, USA? Dead birds were falling from the sky. Who knows what kind of poisons they use in their crops.

NIKI

The whole nature has been polluted. I have to admit that I have a sense of fear. Oh, dear Lord... (She swallows the pill and drinks water)

VAGGELIS

Organic products are the only solution. We buy only organic produce. What's the time? (He swallows the pill and drinks water)

PAVLOS

(To Vaggelis) You've just asked.

MARINA

(She comes on the stage holding a little box of pills) I have been suffering from headache since morning. (She swallows her pill)

NIKI

(As she takes a seat) Migraines. I suffer from these myself. Oh, dear Lord...

VAGGELIS

You should opt for organic produce, Mrs. Marina.

MARINA

(She observes Pavlos) Now that I have a better look at you, I think that you must have gained weight, Mr. Pavlos.

KOSTAS

(He comes on the stage holding his Nintendo) Who has gained weight, mum?

MARINA

Mr. Pavlos, my dear.

KOSTAS

(Strangely) Mr. Pavlos, you should know that you are not a normal person, fat people are not normal.

ANDREAS

(He corrects him) Plump, Konstantinos, is a better word choice.

PAVLOS

(To Marina) In my age, I don't care that much about my looks.

VAGGELIS

It's primarily a matter of health, and then a matter of looks.

YIORGOS

(To Pavlos) Don't tell me that you are a meat-eater.

KOSTAS

Is Mr. Alexandros outside, daddy?

ANDREAS

(He stands up) I see. Come, let's go and take his weapon.

YIORGOS

(He stands up. He takes his glass of whisky) I am going outside too.

(Andreas, Kostas and Yiorgos go inside)

ANTONIS

(He comes on the stage holding a piece of paper. He hands it over to Pavlos) Here you are. Read for yourself.

PAVLOS

(He takes a quick look at it and leaves it) That's enough with this story, my dear. Don't you have anything else to do?

MARINA

(She takes it and has a look at it) The alignment of the planets. It will take place in two years from today.

ANTONIS

(To Pavlos) See? Only you are ignorant of the issue.

ANNA

(She talks loudly from inside) Antonis!

ANTONIS

(Irritated) I can't bear her any longer! I'll leave, I'll go abroad! (He gets inside)

NIKI

Young people get angry just too easily. Oh, my dear Lord...

VAGGELIS

That's how young people are, full of strength. What's the time?

NIKI

Where is Mrs. Froso?

MARINA

(To Niki) I don't understand why you call her "Mrs. Froso"? "Froso" is not elegant can't you see it? "Efrosyni" is her actual name.

NIKI

I apologize Mrs. Marina. Since you object to it, I'll call her "Efrosyni" from now on. Oh, dear Lord...

ANDREAS

(He comes on the stage. He takes a seat) He is so happy when Alexandros gives him his gun.

