

THE SCHMOOZE

A Balfour Play

By Ah@d Ha'@m

Cocktail chatter. A scratchy record that could be an oldy-timey pop record from 1917.

Because it is 1917.

One man – GEORGE –wears a pith helmet. Another guy, JOE, walks up next to him. As much as possible they should look like they are from the era, at a formal event. Both hold tea in saucers. They notice each other:

JOE
Yo.

GEORGE
Yo.

JOE
Can I talk to you?

GEORGE
Free country.

JOE
Cool.
Is it?
Anyway my girlfriend says at parties like this I'm supposed to *schmooze* but like I suck at it.

GEORGE
I'm sorry what is your name?

JOE
Joe.

GEORGE
Hey Joe.

JOE
You?

GEORGE

George.

JOE

Cool cool. This is going well, the schmoozing, right? Am I doing it well?
Hey. I dig your, like, enormous helmet thing.

GEORGE

"That's what she said."

JOE

Hah.
Actually that's a little insulting to women.
And maybe kinda tired?

GEORGE

You're not doing this well. Have fun schmoozing dude.

Goes to leave.

JOE

So hey: ya know how you like control a quarter of the world? Like the sun never sets on your like, *holdings*. And that is an amazing market share: 25 fucking percent. But like: What if you could control more?

GEORGE

...I'm listening.

JOE

Like, suppose there were a piece of land that you don't own yet, but: what if we started to make plans for it on the assumption you own it soon.

GEORGE

What's in it for me?

JOE

I'll get to that.

GEORGE

Where is this land?

JOE

I can't say. But it's like, it's choice my friend. Like, very choice. Like your grandparents' grandparents' grandparents' *loved* it. I represent some important people.

GEORGE
Who?

JOE
(Beat) You're right I totally suck at this

GEORGE
No no you're doing great.

JOE
Yeah?

GEORGE
Actually just ok.

JOE
It's the War, it's been getting me down

GEORGE
Tell me about it.

JOE
Three years and we're just locked in the exact same fucking trenches since 1914 against the same fucking -

GEORGE
Don't say their names, bad luck

JOE
Superstitious?

GEORGE
About some things.

JOE
The fucking *Shmermans*

GEORGE
Exactly. *Shmermans*.

JOE
And the *Shmaustrians*. And *Shmottomons*. And the fucking *Shmussians* are like, *literally* having a Communist Revolution so they're not helping. And the *Shmamericans* haven't landed yet. So like, it's worrying, right?

GEORGE
Who do you represent?

JOE
Powerful interests. I'd rather not say yet.

GEORGE
And the land in question?

JOE
Let's call it shmalestine. I have some people who are interested.

GEORGE
Your people?

JOE
A small percentage of them, actually, but they're like: dead set on it.
And I think it's gonna be yours soon. The British are gonna run it. That is, *if* you win
the war. And for that you might need my people's support.

GEORGE
And again, you are...?

JOE
Important people who I cannot name.

GEORGE
Does it rhyme with -

JOE
Let's call them The Schmooze. What we'll do is get you money for the war. From
banks. Which we like, totally control.

GEORGE
I'm pretty sure that's just a lie people tell-

JOE
I'm serious, we run the banks.

GEORGE
...Pretty sure that's a lie cause like: I know the banks. I know who *runs* the banks.
We're like friends. You don't run them.

JOE
We do! We're rich! We're powerful.

GEORGE
Ok...

JOE
And we need a new place. We want you to promise us this land.

GEORGE
What about America? There's tons of you people in America.

JOE
American Schmooze are the worst.

GEORGE
Are they?

JOE
Woody Allen? We wanna be Jean Claude van Damme!

GEORGE
I have no idea what you are taking about.

JOE
And if *you* promise it to us, it'll mean it'll happen.

GEORGE
Are there people there now?

JOE
There's maybe like lotta non-Schmooze there but like: a lot of the population is our people too.

GEORGE
Like half?

JOE
Totally.
Or like maybe less.

GEORGE
Like a quarter?

JOE
Like I'm saying we'll settle there *soon*. When you give the go ahead.

GEORGE
A fifth?

JOE

This isn't about numbers, man. We're like, *gentrifying*. There's gonna be coffee shops *everywhere*. And theatres. And pop-up stores. I'm just spit-balling here but: an outpost of civilization. And like you'll get support from my people in every country we live. Even in Shmermany, they'll turn against the Shmaiser. And by the by, Shmermany is *totally* looking into what I'm saying too and you would totally beat them to the punch if you supported us first.

GEORGE

How many of you are there? For reals.

JOE

11%.

There will be more. Whaddya say?

Just a declaration of support. It'd mean like a shit ton.

Beat.

GEORGE

I know what you want:

*When text is bolded it means there's the sound of **THUNDER** during his words. Maybe flashes of lightning. Like he's Satan.*

...War.

Back to normal. Joe freaked out.

JOE

Excuse me?

GEORGE

Nothing. Just thinking out loud.

JOE

No when you spoke there was this-

GEORGE

You want **War**.

JOE

Yeah like that!

GEORGE
I don't know what you're talking about.

JOE
You didn't hear that.

GEORGE
I'm not sure you know what you want.

JOE
I think I do.

GEORGE
You want **blood, rivers of blood, the land but also the blood. The war and the whip hand for a hundred years, a land settled under British guns! You want the false normal, the ever present fear that the natives remember, that you are temporary. The power and the beautiful terror.**

JOE
Uh, maybe it can be done in peace!

GEORGE
I've done this many times. It can't-

Back to normal. Seamless.

Did I just say something? I felt all weird.

JOE
Uh... you said "yes"?

GEORGE
Did I?

JOE
Pretty sure.

GEORGE
Cool.
Hey. In that case, kneel.

JOE
What?

GEORGE
You'll see.

JOE
Um, we're a party.
Ok.

Joe kneels.

George takes his hat off and "knight" Joe by touching the top of the helmet to each soldier. Joe smiles.

Then he puts the pith helmet over his crotch.

GEORGE
We're almost done.
Kiss it.

JOE
What? *Dude.*

GEORGE
You want this?

JOE
Uhh...

GEORGE
Dude it's a *hat*. Just a hat. That's all I'm asking. Kiss it.

JOE
I'd...rather not.

GEORGE
I'll feel better if you do.

JOE
It feels super weird and kinda – I'm down with my Oscar Wilde brothers but-

GEORGE
Just kiss the fucking helmet Joe.

JOE
But.

He decides. Fine. He leans in. A quick kiss of the top of the helmet. George smiles. Puts the helmet back on.

Joe stands again. George takes a document out of his jacket. Hands it to Joe.

GEORGE
Here.

JOE
What is that?

GEORGE
I knew who you were. Right when the party started. I've been waiting for you here. You already have supporters on my team.

JOE
I do? Why?

GEORGE
Because this is way the messiah comes.

Beat.

JOE
Huh?

GEORGE
You in the Holy Land makes the messiah come.

JOE
Uh... ok.

Beat. Then Joe has an idea.

Hey. Can I ...?

GEORGE
Oh. Sure.

George hands Joe the pith helmet.

Joe tries it on, takes out iPhone. Looks at himself in camera.

JOE
You were right. This feels totally cool.

...End of play.