



This Theatre Play and Dialogues were Created during the GO&SEE Activity in  
Thessaloniki, Greece created by PAT BUTLER

Scene 1

A government office. Dimitra is placing files on the desk. Minister enters.

M Good morning Dimitra.

D Good morning Minister. Welcome back. I was just leaving your briefing notes and agenda details for today. How was your trip?

M I think it went quite well. We can have a debriefing later. I hope there's not much on today, I'm still feeling jet-lagged.

D Well, there are a couple of developments that ...

M I don't know what's going on in town at the moment. The traffic was horrendous this morning. The driver had to take a long detour. Through some very dubious areas.

D I understand there's a demonstration in the central square.

M Oh not again. Who is it this time? Railway workers? Postmen? Not the lorry drivers again?

D No Minister. It's the actors.

M Actors? What have they got to go on strike for? They are paid a fortune to dress up and play make-believe in front of an adoring audience. Their every move is reported ad infinitum in the press, and they are constantly asked for their opinion on subjects they know nothing about. And people believe them! I can't believe they are asking for more money.

D Not exactly Minister.

M Well, what then?

D It's related to the Presidential Decree that was issued last month.

M Presidential Decree?

D Yes Minister.

M The only decree I can think of is that really boring one that set the grading levels for recruitment of civil servants.

D Yes, Minister.

M That one? But that was just an administrative formality. And it's about the civil service, for God's sake, not soap operas.

D Yes. Unfortunately, drama schools are included in the annex listing the 205 post-secondary school fields of study that are not considered as equivalent to university. Like journalism and



IT. Which means that when these people are recruited to administrative posts in the civil service, they are paid at the same level as school leavers.

M And who decided to do that?

D It's the way it's always been done.

M Then why did we need the decree?

D Because of the current obsession with transparency. It's no longer enough that senior civil servants know that rules; everyone else has to know them too. If you remember, section 3.4 of the decree ...

M That decree was 256 pages long. You didn't expect me to actually read it did you? You assured me it was purely administrative, and only related to recruitment in the public sector.

D It is.

M So why are actors in there in the first place?

D We had to cover all possible courses. One never knows who is going to apply for a post, and we have to know at what level they should be graded.

M Well, I do think you could have pointed this out to me at the time. But I suppose this will all blow over soon enough. A few actors going on strike is hardly going to affect people's lives, is it?

D Unfortunately, it seems to be more than just a few actors.

M What do you mean?

D The students at the National Theatre Schools are on strike as well.

M Oh well, nobody cares about striking students ...

D The teachers at the National Theatre schools have resigned en masse.

M Why? What has all this got to do with them?

D I suspect they feel that their professional standing has been undermined. Their statement said something about you demeaning the level of teaching they are delivering.

M I did nothing of the sort.

D Plus the actors' union has called for all theatre, film and television actors to stop attending rehearsals and cancel performances.

M Isn't this a bit of an over-reaction?

D Possibly, but it seems to have struck a nerve. It's been picked up by the international press, and there have been statements of solidarity from a number of organisations. The PM is not very happy about it. He is worried that the strike might spread to the other 204 professions that are listed in the Decree.



- M Yes, I suppose that might be more of a problem. So what can we do? Can we just issue a note saying that we made a mistake in including actors in this category?
- D A mistake? You can't have a mistake in a Presidential Decree. That wouldn't do at all. Presidents do not make mistakes. And one can hardly equate 3 or 4 years of prancing around a stage with a Master's degree. Or even a Bachelor's.
- M Perhaps we could introduce an intermediate level of pay for these people.
- D You could. But it would have to go through the Civil Service Oversight Board, the Public Servants' Union Management Committee, the Government Standing Committee on Recognition of Standards and the Treasury. And probably one or two committees of the European Commission. You might have a bill to put before Parliament in about 10 years or so.
- M What about if we just withdraw the Decree?
- D No, that's impossible. Withdrawing it would mean that we would have to freeze all recruitment for the civil service. Just when we are actually planning a big recruitment drive.
- M Oh this is ridiculous. Well, what *can* we do?
- D For the moment, I suggest we wait and see. As you say, the strike isn't affecting many people. And it may all just fizzle out.

## Scene 2

A coffee bar. Katarina sits at a table with a stack of folders, two coffees and a doughnut. Eva enters.

- E Katarina, great that you could come. Is that for me? (picks up a coffee and the doughnut) You're a life-saver. I haven't had time to draw breath today. Three interviews. Plus another two lined up for tomorrow. Things are really taking off. I think this time we will actually get somewhere. Did you manage to draft a new press release for tomorrow?
- K Yes, I've got it here for you to check. Plus I called in at the theatre to see how things are going. There's a good crowd there now. Students from the drama school and the university. A few teachers. Lots of energy. They are busy making banners and flyers for the demonstration on Friday. They're also working out some scenes to stage in front of the National Theatre. We've put the word out on all the social media. I think we should get a good turn out.
- E (reading the press release) Brilliant. Well done. (Starts making changes to the draft PR) This press release needs to be much stronger. You need to add in some of the key words we talked about yesterday. This *unjust* decree ... *degrading* ... *an insult* to all performing artists ... *disparaging* ....
- K I thought maybe we should tone the language down for the press. Try to appear reasonable ...



E Reasonable? No. We won't get anything if we're reasonable. Is the Government being reasonable? I don't think so! We need to confront them. No one is going to take any notice of us if we just sit in a corner, politely asking for crumbs. We've been doing that for too long already. And where has it got us? This is not just about this one decree. This is about years of unfair treatment, of governments pretending they care about the arts and culture and then treating us like second-class citizens. As if what we do is somehow frivolous, unnecessary, a pleasant little pastime for people who don't want to do real work. Not recognising our qualifications. Not investing in theatres. Not investing in arts education. This is our chance to change things. We need to make people sit up and take notice. (Handing back the PR) Here, I've made a few notes. Send me a revised draft this evening. And don't hold back this time. Now, I've got to run. I'll talk to you tonight.

### Scene 3

In front of the National Theatre. A small group of demonstrators, surrounded by a larger crowd of onlookers. Eva speaks into a microphone.

E Friends, colleagues, comrades. We are here today to make our protest against the latest insult by the current government. You all know about the Presidential Decree that was issued six weeks ago, which took away at a stroke and without any discussion our hard won rights. Effectively it says that our qualifications are worth nothing. The years we spend in theatre school count for nothing. We are considered on the same level as those with just a school-leaving certificate. What they are actually saying is that theatre is worth nothing. Art is worth nothing. Music is worth nothing. This in a country that claims to be proud of its cultural heritage, that boasts about its long history of civilisation, culture, artistic endeavour, that beats its chest over the fact that one of its cities is a European Capital of Culture this year. Do they even know the meaning of the word culture?

This is just the latest in a series of injustices, and I am here today to tell you that we need to stand up and say enough is enough. This is not just about lower salaries; it is not just about them taking away our career paths. What we are talking about is direct moral degradation. If the State considers us unskilled workers, how can we negotiate an acceptable collective agreement in the private arts sector? Since the decree was issued we, as professionals and students, have tried everything to make our case to the government. And what do they do? They accuse us of "playing politics". Of "not knowing the law". Of deliberately misunderstanding what they are trying to do.

Well, we understand very well what they are trying to do. And we are not backing down. We have right and justice on our side and we will continue to fight for our rights.

### Scene 4

A hotel bar. Eva sits alone at a table. The Minister enters carrying 2 drinks.

M Here we are. Gin and tonic, ice, no lemon.



E Thank you. Cheers.

M Salut.

(They drink.)

Pause.

M Thank you for coming.

E I couldn't help it. I was curious. Why could you – the Right Honourable Minister for Education and Tourism – possibly want to meet me in a secluded bar miles away from the centre? I thought those days were long gone.

M I thought it might be helpful for us to talk informally about your strike. Away from the press and the assistants and the onlookers. Just the two of us.

E Did you?

M Yes. I thought we could put aside our public personas for a while and talk this thing through sensibly. Find some common ground for a solution.

E The solution is very simple. You just have to withdraw the decree, agree to set up a national publicly funded university of the performing arts and recognise officially the true value of our diplomas.

M Eva, you have to be realistic.

E I am being realistic. Those are our demands, and we won't settle for anything less.

M First of all, we cannot withdraw the decree. It regulates qualifications in hundreds of branches of the public service for thousands of workers. And it is needed for the upcoming recruitment drive for the civil service.

E That decree downgrades our studies and marginalises all performing artists. It equates our qualification – after three years of intense study – with a high-school diploma.

M It does nothing of the sort. All the decree does is regulate recruitment to the public sector. And you know perfectly well that it does not concern recruitment to artistic positions.

E So you say. But what about teaching posts? Why do you think all the teachers at the National Theatre School have resigned?

M Because they wanted to make a gesture. They had to do something dramatic – it's a professional deformation.

E If you're going to be frivolous, I'm leaving.

M No, don't go. I'm sorry. But you have to admit, this is all a bit of an over-reaction.

E No it isn't. If anything, we have been under-reacting for years, and this is just one step towards redressing the balance.



M But nothing has fundamentally changed.

E Exactly. And it's time something did change. For too long, we've put up with being undervalued, not taken seriously, treated like irrelevancies. Culture is vital in any society that claims to be civilised. And it should be supported and treated with respect, not ignored and marginalised. We don't even have a ministry specifically for culture – it's lumped in with sport, media and patrimonium, whatever that means.

M smiles.

E What?

M You haven't changed. You always did jump on to your soapbox at the slightest excuse.

E I can remember a time when you used to encourage me.

M Eva, we were students then. Students are supposed to protest. It's goes with the territory. But eventually you have to learn to operate in the real world.

E Like you, I suppose? Making a packet of money in TV, and then – when the parts start to dry up – using your name and fame to get yourself a safe seat in Parliament.

M Is it better to spend your life in an obscure theatre collective, doing “meaningful” and “relevant” pieces that only your friends come to see?

E That is unfair.

Pause

M You're right. I apologise. It seems as if neither of us has changed very much. We never could discuss these things for more than five minutes without arguing.

E (starting to leave) I don't think this meeting was a very good idea.

M Don't say that. It's good to see you again.

Silence

M Look, we have to get through this stalemate somehow. But what you are asking for involves major changes in a number of sectors. I don't have the power to do that.

E Well, who does?

M Different departments – education, interior, patrimonium ...

E So, call a joint meeting.

M It's not that simple.

E Why not? Why do you always have to complicate things? These are your colleagues. Talk to them. Persuade them. Use that irresistible charm you're so famous for. Niki, this is a chance to do something significant. Isn't that why you went into politics?



M I don't remember any more. (pause) It's years since anyone called me Niki. Alright. I can't guarantee anything, but I will see what I can do.

### Scene 5

The Minister's office. The Minister is on the telephone.

M So, what do you think? It seems to me it's a way of giving them something at a small cost to us without losing face. ... I've already spoken to Alex about it and Interior won't raise any objection. ... No, obviously, there's no implication that we accept all their demands. And a new university is out of the question in the current economic climate. ... Well, it's the usual story, isn't it? They're bound to ask for ten times what they are prepared to accept. ... Yes, I am pretty confident that this will solve the problem. If you agree, I'll get my office to set up a meeting for next week. ... Good. Then maybe we can get on with some real work. Like preparing for the election. ...

### Scene 6

A press conference.

M So, in closing, I should just like to reiterate that we have listened to what the demonstrators have been saying. We understand their frustrations and, following intense discussions among all the departments concerned, we shall be introducing to Parliament tomorrow an amendment to the Presidential Decree that caused all this upset. This amendment makes it clear that the Decree does not apply to public recruitment of artists to positions of an artistic or educational nature. We are confident that this amendment addresses the principal issues raised by the demonstrators and will allow them to return to their work and their studies, knowing that this Government is committed to supporting a thriving artistic scene in our country.

We recognise that the cultural sector has been neglected for a number of years, and especially by the previous government. We cannot expect that all the mistakes of the past will be corrected immediately. But we are making a good start with this amendment, which effectively reconfirms that artists are a special case and deserve to be treated as such. And this will be the basis for a wide-ranging review of artistic education in the coming months and years.

Thank you.

### Scene 7.

An occupied theatre. Eva is on the phone. Katarina is preparing a banner.

E No, of course it's not acceptable. I told you exactly what we want, and we are not going to settle for anything less. ... Oh come on. You come up with this pathetic little amendment, make some vague promises about possibly starting a review some time in the future, and expect us to touch our forelocks in gratitude and fade back into the wings so that you can look magnanimous, generous, and above all reasonable. We've heard it all before. We want firm commitments on a university, on salaries, on job security ... No, I don't really see any point in meeting, unless you have something concrete to offer. ... Yes, we shall be demonstrating on Friday. And every Friday after that until we get what we want. (Hangs up.)



Katrina looks at her.

E What?

K Nothing.

E What?

K Well, haven't we won? I thought we were striking because of the Decree.

E That was just the catalyst that started all this. We have the momentum now and we have to take advantage of it. The Government will not want this dragging on into the election campaign. In fact, we should probably be asking for even more. A subsidised festival, with a fringe section for emerging artists. Full payment during rehearsals for theatre actors. Special tax rates for all performing artists.

K Don't you think that's going a bit far? Are we such an exceptional group?

E Yes, we are! Culture and art are as important as the air we breathe. Without it, we are animals. The artist's role is to illuminate and feed the human soul; to create beauty; to question assumptions; to broaden our horizons; to explore all aspects of human nature. And yet, most politicians see us as just a drain on resources – a bunch of spoiled self-centred narcissists, playing around, dressing up, getting paid for doing our hobbies. Katarina, if you're not a hundred percent with me on this, maybe you should take a step back.

K No, no. It's not that. I am a bit worried about whether I'll be able to take my exams next month.

E Katarina, this struggle is more important than any one individual. Of course, it causes ... inconveniences. But the result will be worth it in the end. And I'm sure the school will make arrangements for everyone to catch up on whatever they have missed. Besides, we can't stop now. I've had messages of support from performing arts groups and unions in practically every country in Europe. We have struck a chord far beyond our own borders. Actors' union leaders in France and Italy have offered to come over to help us plan the next steps. They will also hold parallel demonstrations in Paris and Rome. There's a movement to take the issue to the European Parliament. A group from Portugal wants to make a film of our struggle. This could be the beginning of something really big.

K I know. It's amazing. But ...

E It's a turning point. We have to carry on. You see that, don't you?

K Yes, but ...

E Great. Now, if you could carry on here, I have another interview to do.

## Scene 8

The Minister's office. The Minister is just hanging up the phone. Dimitra stands in the doorway.

D I take it the problem has not gone away after all.





M Apparently not. It's not enough that we cancel what started this whole problem. We also have to correct all the mistakes of the past 20 years.

D Eva Galis is a very determined woman.

Pause.

M Yes, she is.

D I take it you know her quite well.

M I used to. We were students together. She was always ... passionate ... about her beliefs. Driven. Idealistic.

D You were close?

M Yes ... for a while. At one point, I thought ... But we were just too different. Constantly arguing, wanting different things in life. She thought I sold out. I thought she was unrealistic. You would think she would have mellowed with the years. But it seems not.

D I hear that the opposition are planning to put out a statement in support of the actors' position.

M Well that's a bit rich. What did they do when they were in power? Nothing, that's what. Which is why we are in this mess now. They're just jumping on the bandwagon.

D Quite likely. I also hear that the PM is not very happy with the way things have gone.

M None of us is happy.

D He is especially unhappy. Partly because of his wife.

M Well, yes, I can understand that

D She is on the governing board of the National Art Gallery. Apparently, she was in line to become the Chair of the board when the current chair retires in a couple of months. But, what with the whole arts sector supporting the strike, there is some suggestion now that she might not be the best person for the position. It seems she is making the PM's life rather difficult.

M Which means he is going to make our life difficult.

D There is also the matter of the upcoming election. It would be a boost if he could announce a solution to the problem before campaigning starts in earnest.

M But there isn't a solution. We have already accepted what they were asking for. And they just came back with more demands.

D Hmm. On a brighter note, tourism figures are up for this month. Way above what was projected.

M Really? Is that related to my trip to the Far East last month?



D It doesn't seem so. It's mainly European visitors. We're not really sure what the reason is. The research department is looking into it. But it might make the PM look at you a little more favourably.

M Well, I suppose we have to be thankful for small mercies.

### Scene 9

A coffee bar. Katarina sits at a table with a coffee, looking at her phone. Dimitra enters carrying a coffee and sits.

D Katarina. Good morning. Finally, we get to meet face to face, rather than just across a crowded meeting room.

K Good morning.

D Thank you for coming.

K I didn't seem to have much choice.

D Oh, there's always a choice. You just need to be aware of all the consequences before you make it. I thought it would be useful for us to have a chat. Off the record. Just the two of us. In much the same way as our respective superiors have been doing.

K What?

D You didn't know? I thought you were Eva's right-hand woman. Yes, your sainted Eva and my minister have been meeting in secret. Just the two of them.

K Why? Where? I mean ...

D Why? Possibly because the Minister thought he could use your strike as an excuse to get back together with his old love. Possibly because he genuinely thought he could convince her to see his point of view. Possibly because he has ambitions, and thought stopping the strike would be a feather in his cap. Possibly all three. Where? Do you remember Eva being spotted on the outskirts of the city a couple of weeks ago by a journalist from the Sunday Record and giving an impromptu interview? I'm pretty sure she had just come out of the Plaza Hotel.

K They were in a hotel together?

D It seems more than likely.

Pause.

K Well, it's none of my business.

D On the contrary. It is very much your business. And mine. Think how this would look if it got out.

K What Eva does in her private life is her own affair.



- D An unfortunate choice of word. And, sadly, not even remotely true. Not when she is presenting herself as the pure idealist, fighting for respect and recognition with no thought for herself, but meeting her old boyfriend on the side. In secret. Who just happens to be a government minister and who is – as far as the public is concerned – her main adversary. You must see what the newspapers would do with this.
- K Why would the newspapers find out?
- D You are delightfully naive. The newspapers would find out if someone told them.
- K You would do that?
- D Not necessarily. Not unless I had to.
- K But if you did, it would be just as bad for your minister as for Eva.
- D It wouldn't, you know. Nobody really cares about a minister – especially a male minister – having an affair. In any case, he could spin it as what it probably is – indulging in a bit of nostalgia with someone who used to be important to him, while at the same time trying to solve an ongoing political impasse. But for Eva, the story will be completely different. I must say, I admire her. In a short time, she has built a very convincing public persona as an honourable defender of the weak, fighting for justice, radiant with integrity, honesty and transparency. That doesn't sit well with secret assignations in out-of-town hotels.
- K Why are you telling me? You should be talking to Eva.
- D Oh no, I can't do that. It isn't my place. I am just a civil servant – I couldn't possibly get directly involved in a political issue. No, my role is to advise ... and to warn. Away from the limelight.
- K And what are you advising me to do?
- D Well, you might want to think about the bigger picture. And your own position in it. I know you feel loyalty to Eva ...
- K She has been very good to me.
- D Has she? Well, if you say so. Although from where I am sitting, I should say you have been very good to her, and she has been very happy to have someone at her side to whom she could delegate all the hard work, while she swanned around, having important meetings and cultivating her image with the media. Personally, I admire loyalty. It's a much under-rated attribute. But eventually you have to ask yourself, is your loyalty to Eva? Or to the cause? Because they are not necessarily the same thing.
- K I think they are.
- D So what exactly is "the cause"? It started as a protest against the Presidential Decree. The Government offered a solution to that. Then it became something else entirely. A new university. Higher salaries. Better job security. Tax breaks. Subsidies.
- K Well, all those things would help us.



- D Of course they would. But you must know – and Eva must know – that you are not going to get all those things immediately. There has to be a negotiation. Give and take on both sides. The Government already thinks it has given something. It's time for a gesture from your side.
- And you can't strike for ever. I imagine the students are getting anxious about their exams. The TV actors are already drifting back to work. I advise you to talk to Eva. She needs to moderate her position. If not ... well, the newspapers may have a fresh slant on the whole story soon.
- K Blackmail.
- D Not at all. Give and take. It's in everyone's interest.
- K Even if I do speak to her, there's no guarantee she will listen. I don't have any say in deciding on strategy.
- D You underestimate yourself. You are the one in touch with the students. You know the mood of the strikers. She doesn't. She is surrounded by people who think like her, but don't necessarily have much contact with the rank and file. You can persuade her that her support is slowly leaking away. Rumours of an affair with the minister would be the end. (*Starts to leave.*) Call me when you have spoken to her.

## Scene 10

An occupied theatre. Katarina sitting at a table, working at her computer. Eva enters.

- E Oh, here you are. Listen, I need you to round up as any people as you can for the demo on Friday. And get them to come up with a new performance – something that will grab the press's attention. We need to move this whole campaign up a notch, really make it difficult for the Government to ignore us. I'm going to try to involve a couple of high-profile TV actors, get them to speak. That should bring the TV cameras out.
- K It might not be so easy. People are starting to lose interest ...
- E That's why we need to make an extra effort. We need a big push, to show the Government we are serious and we are not giving up. They will compromise. They will want to end this before the election campaign starts in earnest.
- K But they have already compromised. And we just ignored it.
- E That was hardly a meaningful compromise. Amending the Decree was the very least they could do. They will go further.
- K You seem well informed about what the Government will and won't do.
- E I have an instinct for these things. I could have been a politician, you know. I was approached once ...
- K By the Minister for Education?



E What? No, of course not. It was the Green party, actually. You couldn't possibly imagine I would consider joining the current lot? In any case, I thought I could do more good through theatre and activism.

K Well, there are some rumours going round ...

E Rumours? What sort of rumours?

K About you and the minister ...

E Me and ... Where did you hear that?

K Is it true?

E What? No!

K So you weren't close to him in the past?

E Well, yes, we were ... good friends. But that was a long time ago.

K And you haven't met him recently? In a hotel?

E Who told you that?

K Is it true?

E Look, he asked me to meet him to discuss the strike. He wanted an informal conversation, off the record. That's all it was.

K That's not what it looks like. Why did you keep it secret? Why not tell me, at least?

E Because it had nothing to do with you.

K If it was related to the strike, it had everything to do with me.

E I don't have to keep you informed of all my comings and goings ...

K And it wasn't very smart to give an interview immediately afterwards not 100 metres from the hotel.

E Well I ... This journalist just happened to be there ... I couldn't just ignore him, could I?

K With the result that you are now seriously compromised.

E I don't see how.

K If I know about it, so do other people.

E But it was all perfectly respectable ...

K So you say. But even if it was, what difference does that make? It's what it looks like that counts. At least to the press.

Pause.

K We need to make a deal.



E We can't. We're so close ...

K Wake up. We are not close. Everyone is getting fed up. We can't take our exams. People are losing money and jobs. And half the people on strike don't understand what it's all about. This can't go on much longer. We need to make a deal. Before the press start saying that you are literally in bed with the minister.

Pause

E We can't.

K We can. We have to. It's over Eva. It's time. Say you will talk to them. Get as many concessions as you can. But make a deal.

Silence. K starts to leave.

E Just out of interest, how did you find out about my meeting?

K I don't have to keep you informed of all my comings and goings.

## Scene 11

Minister's office. Dimitra enters.

D Good morning, Minister.

M Good morning, Dimitra.

D I have the latest tourism figures. Plus a preliminary analysis from the research department of the increase last month.

M If it's not good news, I don't want to know.

D Well, I suppose it depends on your point of view.

M What do you mean?

D The figures are up again.

M Well, that is good news.

D Yes ... The reason seems to be related to the strike.

M Oh come on. That's not possible. People don't go on holiday to see demonstrations.

D No. But we have been getting a lot of publicity in one way or another. Film of the demonstrations and sit-ins has been shown all over Europe. A lot of it has included street theatre, with music and dancing. The international delegations who came to support our actors have been posting photos on social media. And of course, they didn't spend all their time demonstrating and plotting in dark offices. They went to the beach, visited



monuments, ate in restaurants ... This strike has brought us into the spotlight, and it seems people like what they see.

M That's a turn up. Who would have thought it? Every cloud ... and all that.

D I have some more good news. It has come to my attention that the actors may be willing to negotiate.

M What?

D Yes, apparently many of the rank and file think this has all been dragging on too long, and can't understand why the leadership is not being more proactive. It seems they would now be open to a meeting.

M That's a surprise. Do you think this is genuine?

D Oh yes, I think so. You will have to offer them something, so that they can save face. But it needn't be anything too generous. And it will all be contingent on winning the election, of course. I have taken the liberty of jotting down a few suggestions (*hands over folder*). If you agree, I will set up a meeting.

M Hmm. Yes, why not. I wonder what has happened to make Eva change her position.

D Who knows? Maybe she realises this can't go on for ever.

## Scene 12

A radio news broadcast. (Or TV news.)

Newsreader The Minister for Education today chaired a meeting aimed at bringing to an end the ongoing strike by actors, musicians and others in the artistic sector. The meeting brought together representatives of the striking artists with ministers and secretaries of state from the departments of education and tourism, employment, and sport, culture, media and patrimonium. Before the meeting, the Minister made a statement to the waiting journalists.

M I just want to say how pleased I am that the various parties in this dispute have accepted our invitation to sit down and discuss calmly and frankly the current situation. I understand very well that artists feel they have been neglected. Undoubtedly, mistakes have been made in the past by previous governments. And it is our role, as a responsible administration, to acknowledge those mistakes and to examine how we can correct them. And we are also here to clear up some misunderstandings that I think have arisen during the public debate on this matter.

I should just like to repeat, once again, that the infamous Presidential Decree, which sparked this dispute, does not change existing provisions in the legislation and that the employment of artists in the public sector for artistic work is expressly excluded. In any case, with the amendment we have adopted, we have essentially returned to the status quo ante. So what I hope to see today, as I said, is a frank exchange of views that will help us get to at least a road map for the future development of artistic education and employment in this country.



**Newsreader** In a surprise development, the leader of the strikers, Eva Galis, left the meeting after an hour. She has since been unavailable for comment. After the meeting, our political editor, Katya Dimas, spoke to Ms Galis's deputy, Katarina Barios.

**Katya** So, Katarina, how do you think the meeting went today?

**K** We had a very intense discussion, in which we spelt out clearly the injustices we have been subject to for years. To be frank, at first, I had the impression that we were not really being listened to. The politicians kept talking about a "misunderstanding", as if it was all a question of semantics. However, they finally understood that, if there is a misunderstanding, it is a moral one and it must be remedied. We have agreed to suspend the strike and to meet again in a week's time. I should just like to pay tribute to my colleague, Eva Galis, who unfortunately was taken ill during the meeting. It is largely thanks to her tireless work over the past weeks that we have managed to get to this position today. We all wish her a speedy recovery.

## Scene 13

A hotel bar. The Minister and Eva sitting at a table with drinks.

**E** You must be feeling pretty pleased with yourself.

**M** I am actually. We won the election ...

**E** With a reduced majority.

**M** Even so, we won. I held my seat. With an increased majority. Largely thanks to you actually. Your strike – or rather, the end of your strike – did wonders for my profile at just the right time.

**E** You sold us out!

**M** Eva, I did not sell you out. The students needed to go back to school to do their exams. Most of the teachers needed to go back to work for the money. It just went on too long. And you got most of what you asked for.

**E** No. What we got are a lot of vague promises of working groups, consultations, a new "road map", possibly a university of the performing arts at some time in the future ...

**M** Eva, that's a lot. And the new government will take its promises seriously.

**E** You expect me to believe that?

**M** I do. I have already heard that the PM is going to create a new ministry. Devoted to culture and the arts. His wife insisted, apparently.

**E** Huh! Most likely another cosmetic change. Or a job for one of his mates, who will want to privatise everything and whose idea of culture is an evening of karaoke, followed by a late-night horror movie.





M Don't be such a snob. Anyway, I have it on good authority that the new minister will be someone with an intimate knowledge of the arts, well-read, experienced in the theatre – altogether a rather good choice, in my opinion.

Pause.

E You?

M Yes.

E Why?

M What do you mean, why? I have the right background and experience ...

E That's usually a reason not to appoint someone.

M ... I'm loyal, and resolving your strike gave me some rather good exposure in the media at just the right time.

E I don't know what to say. I don't know if this is good or bad. You don't exactly have a reputation for bringing in radical change. Or any change.

M Well, no ... But this is my area. And I do know something about it. But it is true, I will need help. Actually, I had been thinking of asking you to join the team as a special adviser.

E What?

M But then I realised that would never work. And you would hate it.

E Yes, I would.

M And then, Dimitra came up with a rather intriguing idea. She's taken rather a shine to your little protégée – what's her name? Katarina? yes Katarina. She wants to bring her in as a junior aide.

E What?

M Yes. She can help Dimitra with the admin. But also, advise on policy. Come up with ideas. Think out of the box. Brainstorm. All that. You know.

E But she's only just out of college.

M I know. But that can be an advantage. She is not jaded, or fazed by the bureaucracy. She doesn't know what is impossible. And she was quite impressive during the negotiations. And willing to be flexible.

E I'll bet she was.

M Now, Eva ...

E She betrayed me. And if she can betray me, she'll betray you.

M Oh I dare say. In the end. But that's part of the game, isn't it? Ultimately, everyone looks out for themselves. And in the meantime, we all get something. She gets some valuable



experience. Dimitra gets a useful assistant. And I get to have an attractive, energetic, young woman around the office. Win-win-win, I would say.

E You paint a very sad picture of the world.

M Sad maybe, but true. What about you? What are you going to do now?

E I'm not sure. I may travel. I need to get away for a while. ... I've had an offer from a group in Portugal to be a sort of Visiting Artist for a year.

M That should be fun. And you'll soon bounce back. I know you.

E Do you? Maybe once. Not now. I was right, you know. We could have won. Until I was stabbed in the back by the person I trusted the most. Who you now tell me is going to work for you. How do you expect me to bounce back from that?

M Welcome to the real world.

E If this is the real world, I don't want it.

M What you have to understand, Eva – what you have never understood – is that, in the real world, you don't win arguments because you are right. You win arguments because you're better at arguing. It's not enough to be right. You have to be strategic.

E Really? And what was your strategy? Undermine me by subverting my deputy? How noble.

M Being noble doesn't get you what you want.

E Well, it should. (*Finishes her drink.*) Thank you for the drink. And good luck with your new position. You know, Niki, if you do get the ministry, you have a chance to do something really good. Don't waste it. (*Turns to go.*)

M Eva ... when you come back from wherever you go, maybe we could get together occasionally? Just for a drink? What do you think? Talk about the old days? Argue? Wind each other up?

Pause.

E I don't think so. I don't want to talk about the old days. I'd rather talk about the future. And I don't think our respective futures have much in common. Do you? (*Leaves.*)