

## **Performance Review**

A ten-minute play

By

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*Juaquin Idioten sits on a stool under a white down light at the center of an arena stage. He wears a coat and tie. However, his shirt is wrinkled and damp with sweat. His hair is plastered to his head with hair oil. His suit looks slept in. His tie is too short. He has on mismatched socks. He clutches several sheets of dog eared figures. He wears heavy, framed glasses. While he is still alone, Idioten vomits in a trash can.*

*Three people enter and seat themselves at small tables around him. Each table has a pitcher of water and a glass. #1 is an expensively dressed and coifed woman wearing a good deal of jewelry. #2 wears a neat, non-descript, suit. He is very tidy and wears gold, wire rimmed, glasses. #3 wears a golf shirt, gold chain around his neck, two toned saddle shoes, etc. He has a tan.*

#1: Well, I think we all know Wukeen Ideeetun.

I: *(He wipes his mouth with his sleeve.)* Actually - and I certainly understand the continuing confusion here - my name is Juaquin Idioten - a long “o” sound. But, naturally, “Jack” will be fine. Just fine. *(He attempts a tight smile.)* Just right.

#1: I always get that wrong. *(Everyone has a chuckle.)* Well, Jack, perhaps you’d like to give the board a little synopsis of your year.

I: Yes, thank you. (*He refers to his papers - which seem to be out of order.*) Yes, ah yes - here we are. (*clears throat*) As you know, a good deal of the year was devoted to strategic planning. And what a delight to work day after day, morning till night, no breathers - as we say - hammering out our four goals for the coming decade.

#3: Have we seen this?

I: (*a little tense*) Oh yes - I believe we've mailed you at least four copies. But, let me make a note (*He searches his pockets for a stub of pencil which he finds in a coat pocket; He rips the pocket in his anxiety.*) We'll get you another one. Right away.

#3: I'm sure I've never seen the damn thing.

I: Well, well - uh - let me show you. I've taken the liberty of making a small chart by way of illustration. (*He fumbles a chart onto a stand. The chart is overwhelmed with organizational substructures, arrows, boxes, etc. It is headed by the four large goals of his plan.*) Our goals for the decade, as you can see, are One: Assess ourselves and our values. Two: Convene a series of interactive conferences in order to discuss the results of goal number one. Three: Appoint a series of working committees charged with roughing out a series of tactical organizational beliefs and values. Four: Circulate the document developed in number three to all internal and external constituencies and stake holders for review and input.

(*There is a long silence.*)

#2: Jack, in reviewing volume three of the annual budget, on page 592, paragraph 3, item "a", subset "c" (*He pulls out a huge book.*) Did you bring your copy?

I: I've, I've *(He shuffles his papers.)* Apparently I neglected . . .  
However . . . What was the reference again?

#2: Page 592, paragraph 3, item "a", subset "c." So, I note there is an item for \$43.52 ascribed to "miscellaneous operating expenses." Subsequently, in the year end audit, there is a non-material finding which indicates a short fall in account line 55-23-4AB of \$41.27. Does this seem odd, or perhaps unusually coincidental? Not, of course, that we suspect anything irregular. But, it was drawn to the board's attention.

*(Idioten has stiffened during these remarks. He begins to twitch.)*

I: Well, the budget for this year was roughly 410 million dollars - as you know - so an amount of this size, which is slightly more than one millionth of the total, could well have been overlooked.

#1: Do you mean you don't know where the money is? What became of it?

#3: You know, in my business we watch every damn dollar.

#2: A shortage, Jack, is a shortage. After all, it wasn't your money, was it?

*(All three board members appear troubled. Idioten looks wildly from one to another.)*

I: Well I didn't steal it !!

#1: No one said you did. It's simply a matter of concern to the board. So, if you didn't steal it, who did?

#3: You, Chuckles, are the man in charge. And you know what your job is? Your job is to kick ass and take names. So, where is it, Buck? Who took it?

I: *(erupts)* The amount is . . . pathetic. How in hell would I know where it is? How do you know it was stolen? Maybe it just fell through a crack, or it's the spare change in a coke machine, or a rat ate it - the place has lots of rats - or maybe somebody stuck it up his ass!!

*(He realizes what he's done. He sits, diminished, shocked. All three board members reach for their carafes of water and pour large drinks which they drink without stopping for air.)*

#1: Well, I see what they mean about you.

I: What? Who are "they"? I'm sorry - I seem to be very dry, as it were. May I trouble you for a glass of water?

#1: *(No drink. She doesn't acknowledge his request.)* I'm terribly upset, Jack. Stunned. Well - food for thought.

#3: You know, this business is no surprise - not to me. I have some big time worries about some of the people working for you. They're not, well, they're not the sort of folks I'm accustomed to.

I: I guess I don't - could you spare me a little water there?

#3: Hmm? Oh *(Pours a glass, but forgets to give it to J. Eventually, he drinks it himself.)* So, what's your thinking here?

I: Yes, well, we do have some unhappy elements, of course. You know, I'm terrible thirsty.

#3: Stick to the point.

I: Yes, the point. The point. (*He starts to become agitated again.*) My thought was that we might isolate these - elements. These losers - and crooks. Sort of put all of the bad apples together; maybe a uniform of some sort for them so they would be seen as - separate, as the malcontents they obviously are. Clearly (*He stands*), clearly they've been at the trough too long. (*He smacks himself on the head in an exaggerated manner.*). What's wrong with me? How could this have happened? I must have been out of my mind - or drunk!

(*There is a long silence.*)

#3: No, I mean - hell - different people, not normal, funny looks, the way they talk, sex things -there's no room for that. (*pause*) Are you married? Is there a Mrs. Ideeetun?

I: (*He twitches and makes a little humming noise.*) Idioten. With a long "o". Yes. I have a wife.

#3: That's good. Single guys your age usually wear skirts at home.

#2: At this juncture, I feel - with regret, of course - that the likely criminal investigation of these misappropriated funds and the implied - and if I may say it - somewhat cavalier approach to the generally accepted rules of accounting, IRS codes 3 through 2000, and subsequent anticipated actions by the Justice Department and FBI, leave me with a feeling of - unease relative to your stewardship, Jack.

(*I. takes #2's water carafe and drinks hugely. He spills a good deal on himself.*)

I: (*He stands, dripping, his control - such as it was - gone.*) Kiss my ass, bum boy.

*(There is a long silence. Idioten stands, dripping, still holding the carafe.)*

#1: We never see Mrs. Idiot, do we Jack? Is she ill? Does she play golf? Do you? If she feels insecure about anything - anything at all - her hair, clothes, weight?? I hope you're not ashamed of her, Jack. The right woman, the correct partner, means everything, you know. Bring her around, Jack. We'll clean her up. We'll strip a few veins, lift her lids - a tuck here, another there. These are the necessary things of life; and we must learn to accept them.

#3: You should play golf, you know.

I: Golf? Golf? Golf?!! I can't . . . Why should I . . . *(He attempts to collect himself - and fails)* And my wife? *(to #1)* What's she got to do with it? Every year you ask about her, but you don't even know her name. Did you know she has a wooden leg - and a glass eye? She's a pigmy and we have pigmy children. They're so small people squash them by accident. But, hell, that's okay. We have lots of kids, twelve or fifteen - who counts? *(to #2)* The FBI? Well, what have we got? How about this? *(rips up his diagram)* And this? *(throws his papers)* Here - a visual aid! *(He drops his pants and attempts to moon them, but trips over his trousers and falls.)*

*(The board rises.)*

#1: Well, Jack, we'll be in touch. *(They leave.)*

I: My mother didn't raise no fools. *(He attempts to rise and pull up pants, but fails.)* I didn't ride into town on a goddamned water melon wagon. No sir, I did not. Come early! Stay late! Only the first horse in line has a good view! *(He struggles to his feet, pants still down, and removes his coat and shirt.)* My god, an ant, a bug - *(shouts)* This is no game! *(becomes intent)* I can do this. I can rise. I'm a man, a mensch -

ha, ha, ha. (*He slumps to the ground.*) Oh lord - we'll starve. Humiliating. It's all my doing; I can't - not again - I can't. Won't. Can't. I . . . (*#1 returns.*)

#1: Juaquin?

I: What?

#1: Stand up straight.

I: Straight it is. (*He stands.*)

#1: How do you feel?

(*He doesn't say anything. He looks at the floor.*)

#1: The thing you don't seem to grasp, Jack, is that success in others is unattractive. It makes us uncomfortable. It changes the order of things. No one wants that. Of course, once and awhile, we transgress. We presume. We speak out of turn, or with an unpleasant tone. These are errors, Jack. Deviations. Miscues. And we're always sorry. No one wants to be disliked, or feel threatened, or to displease. At the end of the day, we want to go home and rest secure in the knowledge that we have done nothing, that we have either pleased, or been ready to please. The alternative is misery, anxiety, and - take heed, Jack - anger. These are the wages of sin. And you are a sinner, a sinner who wants to be forgiven. Isn't that so, Juaquin? (*Idioten nods, looking at the floor.*) You know what's needed, don't you? (*He nods again.*)

#1: Good, Jack. Good.

(*#2 and #3 return. All three board members stand in a row. J. gets down on his knees and pours the rest of the water on his head.*)

#2: Well done, Jack. *(They give him a polite round of applause.)*

#3: We knew you'd come around, Ideeutun.

I: It's Id . . . *(#3 stops him with a smile and a finger to his lips.)*

#3: We got this made just for you, my boy. It's your official hat; just like last year's - only larger.

*(It's a dunce cap, with "Idiot" printed on it in block letters. I. stands as it is put on his head. His pants remain around his ankles.)*

#1: Congratulations, Jack. Well done.

*(The board applauds again. They throw a few paper streamers over Idioten. Then they leave, all smiles. Idioten, stands still wearing his dunce cap, pants down, drenched, and covered with streamers, as the lights fade. He does not smile.)*

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