

ACT ONE

SCENE NINE

TROTSKY

Oh man. I can't even watch this. This is too much. Sorry, folks, you're going to have to take this one. The second-hand embarrassment. It's too much even for me to handle.

(TROTSKY brings KERENSKY a phone, shaking his head.)

I'll see you at the top of the next act.

(TROTSKY exits. KERENSKY picks up the phone and dials.)

KERENSKY

Son of a bitch. When I get my hands on him, why, I'll--

(Light on KORNILOV, on the other end of the stage, with his own phone receiver.)

KORNILOV

Hello?

KERENSKY

Hello, General!

KORNILOV

Oh, Mr. Prime Minister, sir. How are you?

KERENSKY

Kerensky, remember? And I'm fine, just fine. I was calling because I just spoke with L'vov, and he told me some very interesting things about the conversation you had with him earlier.

KORNILOV

We did have a very interesting conversation.

KERENSKY

I could tell.

KORNILOV

Is L'vov there with you?

KERENSKY

Uh...

KORNILOV

He said you two were best friends. That you knew each other very well. That's why I was so open with him; I knew he could be trusted.

KERENSKY

Right. Yes. He's here with me.

KORNILOV

Excellent. Good evening, Mr. L'vov.

(An agonizing silence, during which
KERENSKY makes an agonizing decision,
and then finally:)

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Hello, General Kornilov.

KORNILOV

Wonderful to hear from you again. I trust you made it back to Petrograd safely?

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

I did. The train ride was very pleasant.

KORNILOV

Really? The last time I rode the train, they hadn't gotten the braking system to work correctly. It kept throwing us out of our seats.

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Yes, well, they must have repaired that.

KORNILOV

I see. I'm glad you could take my message to the prime minister.

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

It went very well. I told him your thoughts on everything.

KORNILOV

Did you let him know that he should come to military headquarters for a visit.

KERENSKY

Yes. Amongst other things?

KORNILOV

Other things? (Beat) Oh, yes, we did talk a lot about the future.

KERENSKY

The future.

KORNILOV

I must say, I didn't think that you or your government had such open minds. It's remarkable that you're willing to consider other points of view.

KERENSKY

Other points of view.

KORNILOV

L'vov said that you and he talk about that sort of thing a lot. About the future. And that you're always open to changes.

KERENSKY

Not really.

KORNILOV

No, no, L'vov insisted. Right, Mr. L'vov?

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Well, I don't know about that. But we did talk a lot about the different ways that things could go.

KORNILOV

Exactly. And I think that your encouragement for me to look for openings is admirable, but/

KERENSKY

Openings?

KORNILOV

But I don't think I want to leave the government right now. At least not like that.

KORNILOV (Continued)

I've been giving it some thought, and you were right when you said that the best way to help the country is through governance. I think that there's a lot that I can do in this position, and even more if I were to be promoted one day.

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Promoted?!

KORNILOV

That is what we discussed, Mr. L'vov. Don't you remember?

KERENSKY

Of course I remember!

KORNILOV

Prime Minister?

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Of course I remember!

(as himself)

Now, Kornilov, let's not be hasty. We should both sit down and come up with a course of action that is good for everyone.

KORNILOV

Come to military headquarters, then.

KERENSKY

I am very busy.

KORNILOV

Okay. I can come there.

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

No!

KORNILOV

No?

KERENSKY

No! You've got your own work to do, and if you come here, people might get the wrong idea.

KORNILOV

I don't think that they would think anything was amiss.

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

They would if you marched your army into Petrograd!

KORNILOV

Well, I mean, that's what I was planning on doing anyway.

KERENSKY

You WHAT?!

KORNILOV

Yes, of course, because of the Bolsheviks/

KERENSKY

The Bolsheviks want me out of office?

KORNILOV

You knew that already, didn't you?

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Those damned Bolsheviks!

(as himself)

Calm down, Mr. L'vov. Kornilov, what do you mean by this?

KORNILOV

(confused)

I just... the Bolsheviks were talking about an uprising, in the salons and drawing rooms. Mr. L'vov told me about it. Additional military support might be necessary.

KERENSKY

Additional military support? For the Bolsheviks?

KORNILOV

No, for/

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Prime Minister Kerensky is the only one who could be the dictator, the only one strong enough, and smart enough, and brave enough, and handsome enough/

KORNILOV

Handsome?

KERENSKY

Do you not think me handsome, Lavr?

KORNILOV

Of course I do, sir, it's just/

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Kerensky!

KORNILOV

What?

KERENSKY

I said to call me Kerensky, remember?

KORNILOV

Yes, I know that you said that, but why is L'vov/

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

Never mind all that!

KORNILOV

Um.

KERENSKY

Never mind all that! Kornilov, I need you to be very clear; when you talked with L'vov, what did you tell him that you wanted?

KORNILOV

Oh. I told him that it would be nice to see Russia unified again, and if I had to become dictator to do that, that would be okay.

(KERENSKY looks as though he's about to have an aneurysm.)

He spends several moments sputtering, gulping air, and trying to find his words.)

KORNILOV (cont.)

Um, sir/

KERENSKY

I cannot believe that you would do something like this to me, Lavr.

KORNILOV

I really don't know what you're talking about, sir. If I could just speak to L'vov/

KERENSKY

(as L'VOV)

No! You may not speak to me! You have betrayed Prime Minister Kerensky in the highest order! (As KERENSKY)
 I am wounded, hurt! What a terrible day in history!
 (As L'VOV) *You should be ashamed of yourself, General!*
 (As KERENSKY) Ashamed! You thought you could get away with it, but you should have kept in mind that L'vov is delivering all news to me— (As L'VOV) *Right!* (As KERENSKY) —and he won't leave anything out! (As L'VOV) *Not a single thing!* (As KERENSKY) You're nothing against my wits, Kornilov, and L'vov knows that— (As L'VOV) *I do!* (As KERENSKY) —and I know that, but you must not know that, otherwise you wouldn't even think about attempting such a dastardly deed! (As L'VOV) *Dastardly! You thought you could get away with it, but little did you know that Kerensky—* (As KERENSKY)
 That's me, General. (As L'VOV) —*little did you know that I would report all of your terrible plans back to the prime minister! You won't be able to get away with this, Kornilov, you and your sneaky little—* (As KERENSKY) —sneaky little third cavalry corps; why, I'll arm the Bolsheviks— (As L'VOV) *He'll arm the Bolsheviks!* (As KERENSKY) —before I ever let you rule over the country, you no-good, dirty rotten— (As L'VOV) —*traitorous, scandalous—* (As KERENSKY) *bourgeoisie-loving scum! Now!* (As L'VOV) *Now.* (As KERENSKY) Mr. L'vov and I have other meetings to attend to. (As L'VOV) *Yes sir! We're very busy!*

KERENSKY (Continued)

(As KERENSKY) Very busy here, Kornilov, so you had best leave your foul notions of leadership at the door and forget even being let in to Petrograd! (As L'VOV) *You'll never be let in!* (As KERENSKY) Come, Mr. L'vov. (As L'VOV) *Right away, prime minister!* (As KERENSKY) We'll be going now, General Kornilov, good day to you SIR!

(KERENSKY hangs up the phone with a bang, panting. The light on KORNILOV goes out, and KERENSKY staggers over to his chair, collapsing into it.)

KERENSKY (cont.)

Aleksandr, you goddamn genius. You had him on the ropes. Right where you want him! God. Has anyone ever been this good? Anyone? Napoleon, even? I think not. Ha. Ha ha!

(KERENSKY begins to laugh, more and more hysterically, until he's screaming with half-insanity, half-mirth.)

END SCENE NINE