

# THE PEOPLE'S TOAST

“Vaněka Today” (a contemporization of  
Havel’s Vanek Plays) in Three Scenes:

*The People’s Toast, Shavasana,  
& Critical Acclaim*

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Ellis Stump  
theellisstump@gmail.com  
717-808-4067

## THE PEOPLE

FRAN VANEKA (f): Writer, activist, traveler. 20s-30s.  
ALEK (m): The “Coffeemaster” restaurant manager. 60s.  
VERA (f): Social media influencer. Around same age as Vaneka.  
MICHAL (m): Tech startup coder. Around same age as Vera.

(PHONE: Could be voice of Fran, others, or AI, or text)

## THE PLACE

An outdoor sidewalk bistro in Prague.

Scene I takes place in the year 2019, II in 2020, and III in 2021 or beyond.\*

\*These scenes are recently adapted, as of December 2020.

## THE PLOT

Released from American jail and returned to her homeland Prague, femme-identifying Millennial “Vaneka” applies to serve at a local, traditional, family-run bistro. Unfortunately, its boss, like Vaneka, is struggling to appease modern demand. When her petty privileged friends pay a visit, any remaining “normalcy” spirals into existential absurdism as all consider the meaning of activism, communication, presentation, and success today.

Storyline, characters, and motifs are all inspired by Vaclav Havel’s Vaněk series.

Run time: ~30 minutes

## THE PAST

- Production (Zoom), Untitled Theater Company #61, Rehearsal for Truth Festival, Bohemian National Hall, April 2021
- Print Publication, Vaclav Havel Library Foundation, Dec 2020
- Staged Reading and Residency, World Premiere, Prague Performing Arts Academy, Czech Republic, Nov 2019
- 1st Place Winner, Mini Drama Playwriting Competition, Vaclav Havel Library Foundation and New York University Tisch, July 2019

**I:**  
***The People's Toast***

AT RISE: The outdoor dining section of a bistro along the sidewalk. Umbrellas stretch over tables topped with plastic menus. Ambiance is not fancy, in fact slightly shabby, but sincere. ALEK waits by the entrance and an A-frame sign advertising "Avocado Toast" as the Daily Special.

*(VANEKA ENTERS with a to-go coffee, smoking a cigarette. She passes the entrance.)*

PHONE

Stop walking. You have arrived at your destination.

*(VANEKA falters abruptly, surprised. She paces onward a few steps to finish and dispose of her cigarette, while her phone keeps reprimanding:)*

PHONE, cont'd.

Stop walking. You have arrived at your-

VANEKA

Shhh! I know!

*(SHE manages to silence it, just as ALEK notices her.)*

ALEK

Vaněka?

VANEKA

Yes, *ahoj*. Hello.

ALEK

You're Fran Vaněka?

VANEKA

Guilty as charged.

ALEK

Can I call ya Fran?

VANEKA

No, yeah. I don't mind-

ALEK

“No, yeah?” *Ne* or *ano*? That’s American slang, isn’t that? Every word you all babble over there is so back and forth. Wishy-washy. It’s so... What’s the word?

VANEKA

Um, unintentional, indecisive, ambiguous?

ALEK

Wishy-washy. That’s the one I was looking for.

VANEKA

Oh. Yeah. That would suffice.

ALEK

*(With a scoff)*

Suffice.

VANEKA

I’m sorry? Did I-

ALEK

I’m Aleksander, the boss, the manager. As if anyone cares. Here, little lady. Have a drink.

VANEKA

Oh. Thank you.

*(THEY sit. ALEK pours two glasses, downs his immediately. VANEKA takes hers and sips gingerly.)*

ALEK

Let’s toast. Cheers to your new home.

VANEKA

Thank you. It’s lovely.

ALEK

Ha. Now don’t mock me like that. Don’t... What’s the word I’m looking for?

VANEKA

Condescend? Patronize? Satire?

ALEK

No, just... Just don’t mock me like that.

VANEKA

I'm sorry, sir. I really don't intend-

ALEK

No need to pretend, Fran. I know this isn't the trendy coffee shop scene you're used to. The Cafe Starbucks, where you worked last. Saw that on your resume.

VANEKA

Oh, I actually quite dislike corporate chains. I applied here intentionally, to support a traditional, local, family-centric spot. I only worked at Starbucks till I could find another job.

ALEK

Of course. You can afford those places, so you don't like 'em.

VANEKA

That's not quite it, actually-

ALEK

Hey now, I don't need to know your personal history. Don't know it. Don't need to.

VANEKA

Thank you. I appreciate that.

ALEK

*(Refilling his glass)*

But I do know you're a felon, kid. Saw that on your resume.

VANEKA

That wasn't on my-

ALEK

In the application, little lady.

VANEKA

Oh. Um, yes.

ALEK

Why'd you write that?

VANEKA

I am legally obligated to.

ALEK

I mean, why'd you write all that *hloupost* that got you in trouble?

VANEKA

Oh. I uh, feel humanly obligated to.

ALEK

You're a dissident, or whatever they're calling themselves these days. You were one of 'em in the States. An activist.

VANEKA

I suppose. It's 2019. Everyone's an activist.

ALEK

But you were screaming? Protesting? Got caught?

VANEKA

Guilty as charged.

ALEK

Against their president, old Donald Trump. For immigration and, and climate change, and all that *hloupost*. I see that on the news.

VANEKA

No, yeah. For claiming to know nothing of my personal history/ you seem to actually know quite a lot-

ALEK

Are you gonna do that/ back here in Prague now? With President Milos Zeman?

VANEKA

Oh, I-

PHONE

Stop walking. You have arrived at your destination.

VANEKA

*(Silencing it)*

Sorry. I'm so sorry about that.

ALEK

Don't be sorry, kid, be proud! He's got a mansion for crying out loud. A couple mansions, all marble and Renaissance gold, don't he? And a supermodel wife with platinum hair and designer sunglasses inside each one, like a glossy, polished little doll. A couple, probably.

VANEKA

I'm sorry, who?

ALEK

President Donald Trump, little lady! Come on! Don't you want a couple?

VANEKA

Supermodel wives? Um, perhaps, if they consented to-

ALEK

No, Fran, mansions! Don't you want a couple mansions?

VANEKA

Oh. I wouldn't know what to do with only one mansion.

ALEK

*(Scoff)*

You wouldn't know what to do with only one mansion.

VANEKA

I would not.

ALEK

You'd live in it, little lady! *Legrační*. Can you even operate a basic coffee machine?

VANEKA

No, yeah, I can.

ALEK

Now where'd you learn that, Fran?

VANEKA

Uh, Starbucks.

ALEK

You worked at Starbucks? The Starbucks Palace?

VANEKA

Yes. You saw that on my resume, didn't you?

ALEK

*(Scoff)*

Your resume.

VANEKA

Oh, I'm sorry, was it weak? I can forward you my updated CV in PDF format, linked to my cover letter and multimediuum powerpoint, if you'd like-

ALEK

Is that what they're teaching you at the universities these days? How to write a cover letter but not operate a basic coffee machine? *Legrační.*

*(HE begins refilling the glasses to Vaneka's dismay. SHE struggled to finish hers.)*

ALEK, con't.

Here, kid, relax. Have another drink, and I'll tell you a bit of our history. Then I'll teach ya how to fold utensils into a napkin and toss a side salad in a flash and change the daily specials board. You smoke?

*(Relieved, SHE reaches for her cigarettes.)*

VANEKA

I thought, of all these questions, you'd never ask. I only do while walking but-

ALEK

You shouldn't.

VANEKA

Smoke? Or walk? Or ask questions?

ALEK

Now you're talkin. ' Let's toast. Cheers to the establishment!

*(After gulping)*

We've been here a hundred years, kid. We're part of Prague. This is where, back in the day, folks would come to toast their sloshy pitchers and play cards and catch up on the latest films and sports, not just type away alone on their computer keyboards. To ask each other about their families and wives, not Twitter about politics. To get along, not dissent. Here we're a family, as you can see. A family *for* the families.

*(VANEKA glances around. They are, quite obviously, alone.)*

ALEK, cont'd.

But of course, we've had to adapt to modern demand, you see. We have to... What's the word I'm looking for? It's on the tip of my tongue, so the beer keeps getting in the way. What's the word?

VANEKA

Entertain? Adhere? Appease?



ALEK

We have to adapt! Adapt. Yes. See here; we've gotta craft "artisan delicacies." We have to make *brunch*. Not breakfast or lunch, but this brand new invention of yours, brunch.

*(He snatches a menu from another table, sliding it her way.)*

ALEK, cont'd.

Quinoa bowls. Kale bowls. Millennials, for some reason, want everything in a bowl. And avocado toast. You worship avocado toast. I have to serve goddamned avocado toast!

*(SHE nods to the outdoor A-frame sign.)*

VANEKA

Yes, I see that. On the sign.

ALEK

Ignore the sign, Fran.

VANEKA

Alright.

ALEK

But hey, we still stay true to our original establishment and values, Fran, although I know you don't believe me.

VANEKA

I do. It's honestly quite possible and impressive, cooperating past with progress, you're doing what you can to survive-

PHONE

Stop walking. You have arrived at your destination.

VANEKA

*(Silencing it)*

Sorry. I'm so sorry about that.

ALEK

Now, I don't give a thick flimsy slice of your Mexican vegetable bread-

VANEKA

Avocado toast? Avocados are actually a fruit-

ALEK

-if you're a felon, Fran.

VANEKA

Uh, I appreciate that.

ALEK

I don't need to know your personal history. You can keep that to yourself. But I know you write. Saw that on your resume, and the Internet. You don't believe I can read FaceSpace and Twitter and *The New York Times* and all that *hloupost* but I do.

VANEKA

I believe you.

ALEK

Some of your little stories have even snuck into *The New York Times* and all that *hloupost*.

VANEKA

Yes.

ALEK

And plays into the big city theatres.

VANEKA

Off-off-Broadway, which is what my friends call their living room apartments, but sure.

ALEK

So what're you doing here, then, you "intellectual?"

VANEKA

It's 2019. Everyone's an intellectual.

ALEK

Oh come on, don't spit that at me! Some of your little stories have been in *The New York Times*.

VANEKA

It's 2019. Everyone's had a story in *The New York Times*. My few that have been picked up, mean nothing, pay nothing-

ALEK

Everyone, you say? Millennials, Fran. Not me, kid.

*(Refilling the glasses)*

Here, have another drink, and tell me what you mean by that, everyone's an intellectual?

VANEKA

Oh. Well, any of us who could mash even three words together back in grade school - the quiet kids, who kept to the corners in kindergarten, crafting or reading-

ALEK

Hm.

VANEKA

We were dubbed Gifted by the system and praised by our parents, who worked steadily all those years so we could take risks, who encouraged us to jet overseas and earn MFAs in Creative Writing which I'm still not sure differs from any other kind of writing, and there, we learned how to write objectively subjective theses, but not a personal statement or cover letter.

ALEK

You think that's bad, Fran?

VANEKA

No. Just... uniquely challenging.

ALEK

We've been here a hundred years, little lady. We're part of Prague, and history. But you don't believe me.

VANEKA

I do. You're doing what you can to survive-

ALEK

Can you even operate a basic coffee machine?

VANEKA

No, yeah. I can.

ALEK

I'll teach you how to fold utensils into a napkin, and toss a side salad in a flash, and change the daily specials board.

VANEKA

Alright.

ALEK

Back in the day, it used to be the Boss says "Run" and the employees ask "How far?" Now, the Boss says anything, and you Millennials just blink back blankly with your bowls for eyes and babble: "Why?"

VANEKA

I'm sorry.

ALEK

And that! You all say sorry too much. *Legracani*.

VANEKA

Oh uh, yeah, sorry. I'm sorry. We're sorry. Ah! Sorry.

ALEK

Damn, it's so... The beer has numbed the taste buds at the tip of tongue. What's the word?

VANEKA

Self-deprecating? Cynical? Uniquely depressing?

ALEK

No, come on, spit it out, it's so...

VANEKA

Oh, you mean: Ironic? Contrasting? Collateral?

ALEK

No. It's... Sad. Sad. You're intellectuals, right, little lady? You know your value. You know you're safe. So why feel bad?

VANEKA

Because that value is worthless in the current economy.

ALEK

And what *isn't*, Fran, ya intellectual?

VANEKA

Uh, avocado toast?

ALEK

*(Scoffs)*

We have to adapt! We have to make *bowls* and bow down to *brunch*.

VANEKA

You're doing what you can.

ALEK

I know this isn't your regular trendy scene. Your fancy-shmancy Salon Starbucks in the Sky, where you worked last.

VANEKA

Oh, I actually quite dislike corporate chains. I applied here intentionally, to support a traditional, local, family-centric spot. I only worked at Starbucks /until I could find another job-/  
/Until you could steal another /... Smoke?

ALEK

/Until you could steal another /... Smoke?

VANEKA

*(Relieved, pulling out her cigarettes)*

I thought, of all these questions, you'd never-

*(ALEK swipes the cigarette from her fingers and flings it across the stage.)*

ALEK

Don't you want a couple, Fran?

*(He now either lights up himself and or takes a long drink, unable to respond to Fran's following questions.)*

VANEKA

*(Blinking, still startled)*

A couple what? Jobs, we were musing upon? Well, in this empty gig wasteland, sure. Everyone I know juggles two, three or four if they're lucky-

ALEK

No, Fran, a couple *mansions*! Little old baby lady, *Legrační*. But forget it; you wouldn't know what to do with only one mansion.

VANEKA

I would not.

ALEK

You treasure your dirty little flats, you Millennials, and to live out of rented cars. You don't want a house. You can afford those places, so you don't like 'em.

VANEKA

That's not quite it, actually, I'd love a house. Space. But I don't *need* it, and can't possibly afford it-

ALEK

So where do you live anyway?

VANEKA

I live in a hostel. A few stops away.

ALEK  
(*Scoffs*)

American tourist.

VANEKA

I'm actually a returning local.

ALEK

I don't know that. Don't need to. All I need to know is you fled your mother country like you leave your mother parents, just one in your big zeitgeist of stubborn smart kids.

VANEKA

Resilient. Optimistic, ambitious humans-

ALEK

Oh, come on. Because you can afford to be. I can't.

VANEKA

I'm so sorry about that.

ALEK

And that! You all say sorry too much, as you keep moving and crashing place to place and all that *hloupost*. Meanwhile, I've sat here a hundred years, little lady.

(*On "sat," HE may stand and pace and sloppily bump into things.*)

ALEK, cont'd.

Didn't have no teachers calling me smart. No participation trophies, or even ribbons or participation high-fives. My folks couldn't ship me off to the States for an MFA IPA whatever. I got to work here and considered myself lucky, you know? At a cushy cafe instead of in a factory, operating a basic coffee machine instead of a massive conveyor belt. Tossing salads instead of constructing buildings. Changing this here sidewalk sign with daily specials instead of the train station board with daily delays. Nobody cares or praises or encourages me to take risks. I've been here a hundred years, little lady. Your texts and Twitters don't last longer than a minute.

VANEKA  
(*Quietly, aside*)

I actually quite dislike social media.

ALEK

I'm the Manager, the boss, but now the boss says "Run" and the employees and the automated cash registers stare back and demand "Why." Donald Trump, Fran, and President Milos Zeman - they're the People's Politicians. They don't blink. And yet, here you are, planning to do that back in Prague now with your mother country's current father Milos Zeman. Write your big stories and plays.

VANEKA

*(Rising nervously, planning to exit)*

Perhaps I should be leaving-

ALEK

No! You can't! You have to have one more drink! Twenty-five more cigarettes! A hundred more thoughts, Fran, finish all those and, and then have some more! Come on! Let's toast! Cheers to your-

*(HE is pouring out the pitcher upon the table.)*

VANEKA

Thank you. But actually-

ALEK

*(Sarcastically)*

Or would you prefer a kale smoothie? A crafty little beer? An IPA MFA or whatever?

VANEKA

No, I'm sorry. I suppose just another coffee to-go, if anything?

ALEK

*(Scoff)*

A coffee. *Legrační*.

*(Long beat...)*

I don't know how to operate the basic coffee machine.

*(Another. Then, drunkenly-)*

So what ARE you doing here, you protesting, screaming, fighting, mocking, adapting, wishy-washy, sad, *legrační*, *New York Times* writing intellectual?

VANEKA

Uh, well. Since I dislike social media, I'm pretty much barred from any corporate career. Not like I'd know what to do with a mansion, or even want to know. I just need enough sustenance to survive, in order to help others thrive-

PHONE

Stop walking...

VANEKA

To write words for the people, that will improve and progress our situations. But I'm no martyr; it's for me, too. Despite everything, despite my economic worthlessness in this gig wasteland, I still feel, deep down, those words hold meaning.

PHONE

*Stop talking...*

VANEKA

I still feel excited and inspired and driven to wake up and hit the ground running each day, put pen to new paper, or old fingers to worn-down keys, mashing letters into messages. And I still, god forbid guilty as charged, feel humanly obligated to share them. I still-

PHONE

STOP TALKING, VANEKA! YOU HAVE ARRIVED AT YOUR-

VANEKA

*(Silencing it)*

Sorry. I'm sorry about that. I'm...

*(Suddenly embracing chippier can-do enthusiasm)*

Overflowing with enthusiasm to begin work, Alek! Manager! Boss! Big Brother! This place has been here a hundred years! Can ya teach me how to change the daily specials board?!

ALEK

*(Matching her energy)*

Why of course, little lady!

*(Beat, before drastically dropping to usual self)*

It's avocado toast every day.

*(Silence. ALEK finishes his beer. Lights fade.)*

PHONE

You have arrived at your destination.

## **II: Shavasana**

AT RISE: VANEKA, wearing an apron, folds utensils in napkins at the table. She appears comfortable, perhaps even relaxed, though slightly bored; she's worked there a while. The year is now 2020.

*(For Zoom: VANKEA receives a FaceTime call from VERA and MICHAL. They burst onscreen,*



*squealing with happiness, startling her. Their background is their apartment, all bright white and clean, with optimum front-camera lighting and careful decorations.)*

*(If you're in-person, you can, you know... Be in-person.)*

VERA

Vaneka! Honey! Hi! Hello from your special city overseas! NYC! We hope this finds you healthy and well and wealthy and hell, maybe even /happy/

VANEKA

Oh uh, Vera, Michal. Hey. I'm actually working right now, so could I-

VERA

That's why we're here, cutie! We saw you have a job here now, if you're not offended by me calling it that. Your mom announced it on Facebook.

VANEKA

Oh, uh, yikes.

MICHAL

Yeah, we thought you were still stuck in the slammer, man. We hate to have you serve us.

VERA

You can just fetch us whatever we want, and bring it over when it's ready.

VANEKA

That's um, pretty much my job-

MICHAL

No rush, man, no pressure.

VERA

If you want to treat yourself, go ahead and put that down on us, too.

VANEKA

Oh, I couldn't-

MICHAL

Fran.

VERA

Truly! Indulge! You look like you could use a plain black coffee. We tracked down the menu barcode online, and saw they serve avocado toast. And breakfast bowls.

MICHAL

Fran, you should see how Vera combines those two artisan delicacies into one. She bakes the toast, carefully spreads the avocado slices on top, and then mashes all that together with a mortar and pestle set and plates the grounds in a pretty bowl over quinoa and kale.

VERA

Do they do that-

VANEKA

Oh, I doubt we do that here-

MICHAL

Why not? They should.

VERA

They should! Ask “why not” instead of “what if,” and try that nourishing dish.

MICHAL

Preach, man, it’s so simple.

VERA

So pure. You can whip it up in a flash.

MICHAL

Vera meal-preps it in these bantam bento boxes she takes to hot yoga.

*(VERA models her getup, perhaps extending a leg up upon the table.)*

VERA

What do you think, honey, of my ensemble?

VANEKA

It’s um, very nice.

VERA

Have you tried it yet? Hot yoga? You haven’t, *obviously-*

VANEKA

Yeah no, I have not.

VERA

Oh my god, you absolutely, totally must! It cleanses and detoxifies our lives and souls, Fran. Believe us. It keeps us simple and grounded.

MICHAL

It takes this difficult challenge and makes it even *harder*. We're obsessed with that.

VERA

As for how hard - I can see you begging that question, honey - well, you'd just have to observe Michal in his leggings...

*(VERA wiggles her brows. MICHAL giggles.  
VANEKA stands by, uncomfortable.)*

MICHAL

But seriously, Fran man, how fresh and wet do you feel after an overcoming session like that?

VERA

The literal steaminess translates seamlessly into our sex situation. We think you may appreciate that stimulation and purification. We care about your health, honey.

MICHAL

We care about downward-facing dog.

*(MICHAL wiggles his brows. VERA giggles.  
VANEKA fidgets, uncomfortable.)*

VANEKA

So, uh, can I get you two anything, or...?

MICHAL

We hate to have you serve us. You can just fetch us - well, I guess we'll start with drinks - two mimosas-

VANEKA

Alright.

VERA

And two for me, as well.

MICHAL

And I'll take a cappuccino.

VERA

And I'll start with a vanilla caramel mocha latte with soy milk and chocolate swirls and extra foam on top. Skim. Just bring them over when they're ready.

VANEKA

*(Scrambling to take order)*

That's... yeah, pretty much... my job-

MICHAL

No rush, man. No pressure.

VANEKA

We care about your health. We're obsessed with...

MICHAL

*(To VERA, as if it's an inside joke)*

Downward-facing dog...

*(THEY chuckle and gaze into each other's eyes, endeared. VANEKA backs away awkwardly, then disappears into the restaurant.)*

*(Immediately upon her exit, MICHAL and VERA's giddiness dissipates into nothing, a flat emotionless void, as they stare blankly at the screen or their phones until her return.)*

*(For Zoom: the beverages could be delivered, Amazon Prime style.)*

VERA

*(Coming alive again)*

Oh my god, babe, behold these beverages! We better toast at once.

VANEKA

To what?

VERA

*(Ignoring the question)*

You can use my water, honey.

*(VERA hands VANEKA her water, while she and MICHAL struggle to juggle their various fancy-shmancy beverages.)*

*(THEY snap some pictures, then return their drinks to the table.)*

*(No toast occurs.)*

VERA  
*(To VANEKA)*

We saw you work here now. Your mom mentioned it on Facebook.

VANEKA

Oh. Yikes.

VERA

Why *are* you working here now, honey?

VANEKA

Uh, for money. I guess. Groceries. Rent - my mom's. I live with her now. Cigarettes.

MICHAL

Fran!

VERA

Cigarettes are absolutely totally terrible for you!

MICHAL

It's 2020. Nobody smokes cigarettes.

*(HE hits off a juul or dab pen.)*

VERA

We care about your health, honey.

MICHAL

We're obsessed with downward-facing dog.

VERA

And rent? Prague costs nothing for millennials, Fran. A flat is so cheap, they're basically handing them out.

VANEKA

Yes, if you pay for one...

VERA

They fling fresh fruit from the sidewalks!

VANEKA

If you pay for it... And like, by “they,” you mean-?

VERA

You’ve watched our renovations, right? On my Instagram story? I’m an influencer now, obviously; people love seeing others self-love. So I offer tours of our bright airy space packed with all our house plants and minimalist decor. We have massive, massive amounts of minimalist decor. Maximum minimalism, mama. Have you come by virtually?

VANEKA

I have not.

MICHAL

Fran! That’s offensive.

VERA

It is! You absolutely, totally must. Michal just jetted over to Amsterdam last weekend for this hot and trendy music festival. EDM, right, babe?

MICHAL

*(Nodding, hitting the juul)*

It was lit. The music’s so loud and throbbing, you don’t even have to acknowledge each other.

VERA

And he bought all these vintage records we hung up on one of our backdrop walls, Fran. We have a whole collection.

VANEKA

Oh, I’d actually love to hear those.

MICHAL

Of course, we don’t have a record player.

VERA

But we do have a spin bike that insults you every morning, subscription to a smoothie shaker service that ships you the latest model every week, speakers that stream positive mantras directly into your ear canals at random, and a bidet. That’s all one machine.

VANEKA

Sounds like the Ritz Carlton.

VERA

Vaneka, honey, the Ritz doesn’t have bidets.

MICHAL

Everything is voice-automated. You just tell our Siri what to do.

VERA

It's so pure. Keeps us simple and grounded. And all connects to Michal's watch. Watch!

*(MICHAL holds up his wrist eagerly, but VANEKA begins stepping away.)*

VANEKA

I'm uh, going to slip inside, actually, check on the other tables-

VERA

Oh my god! What? No!

MICHAL

Dude! You can't.

VERA

You absolutely totally can't.

VANEKA

But the other tables-

VERA

But OUR table, Fran!

MICHAEL

What about us? Capital U.S.??!

VERA

We have...

MICHAEL

MORE TO ORDER!

VERA

We have MORE to ORDER, Fran!

*(The couple is panicking, running in and out of their Zoom frames, throwing things around.)*

VANEKA

Alright, alright, alright.

(Beat. VANEKA waits, uncertain, as they sigh relief.)

VANEKA, cont'd.

So... Can I get you two anything, or...?

MICHAL

Fran.

VERA

Oh my god. Honey.

MICHAL

We hate to have you serve us.

VERA

Why are you working here anyway?

MICHAL

Why not just score a gig at a startup, like me?

VERA

(To VANEKA)

It's 2020, honey. Everyone works for a descending or pretty much born-dead startup. If you coded like Michal you could type all day, like a laborious little robot, just like you love! You'd be obsessed with that.

VANEKA

That's uh, not really the typing I prefer-

VERA

We know, Fran. You do your sweet little stories.

MICHAL

Why not just write at *The New York Times*, dude? Of course, it's because they only publish and pay their most popular content producers-

VANEKA

No, yeah. Pretty much.

VERA

Oh my god! You should start a BLOG!

VANEKA



Oh, I-

MICHAL

We have a podcast. We sit down together and record weekly.

VERA

It cleanses and detoxifies our lives and souls, Fran.

MICHAL

You should absolutely, totally write something like that, man. For all your activist...  
*hloupost.*

VERA

True! Put that on the Internet where it belongs!

MICHAL

Finally kick it off the ground! It'll be so simple.

VERA

You can whip it up in a flash. I'll "like" and re-share to my follower base.

MICHAL

Me too! As long as it's not too.. political, of course.

VERA

*(Nodding in agreement)*

The people dislike too much resistance. Just a pinch of passion, a smidge of stimulation to taste, and then overflow of cute, quirky pictures. You could call it "Fran of the House" - like man of the house? Obviously, you'd need a house... So what about "Fran and Friends?" Obviously, you'd need some friends... But wait - we're your friends, honey! We could be on it!

MICHAL

Duuuude, we could be on it! We could be the stars!

VERA

Follow the stars, Fran! This is a sign!

VANEKA

Good ideas, you guys, thanks, but um, that's not really my vision-

VERA

We know, Fran. You do your sweet little...

*(Mumbles, like "whatever they are")*

MICHAL

Why not gig around in streaming service? You could do closed captions! Ka-pow!

VERA

Or time social media alerts! Buzz beep wow!

MICHAL

Or run a dope Twitter account! Read now!

VERA

That wouldn't be selling out, honey, no way. Or, not really-

VANEKA

I know it wouldn't. Oh um.

MICHAL

*(Hitting off his juul, whenever he wants)*

Fran. My man. Are you...

VERA

Seeing anyone, honey? A girlfriend? I don't mean to assume, but obviously..

VANEKA

Oh, uh-

VERA

You could try an app.

MICHAL

We love indulging those before the "main meal."

*(HE winks.)*

VERA

You can put yourself out there without ever leaving your flat! Get one today!

*(SHE flashes an Orbit smile to the Audience.)*

VANEKA

Who... Are you talking to me?

VERA

My followers, Fran, and Siri. Always lending their ears. Isn't that comforting?

MICHAL

Isn't that easy?

VERA

Get one today!

MICHAL

Do you have one today?

VANEKA

A flat? Or, a ... lover? No, I don't. Neither. None. I'm focusing on my writing currently.

*(MICHAL and VERA share a blatantly worried glance.)*

MICHAL

Fran. Don't you wanna meet mindful "meats" who are massively minimalist?

*("Meats" is a sexual innuendo; HE winks again.)*

VANEKA

Well, I'm a vegetarian, but I mean-

MICHAL

Dude, why didn't you say so! Then all you have to do is hit up-

VANEKA

Hot yoga..?

VERA

HOT YOGA! Yes! Girl! You absolutely, totally must give it your adorably sincere old college try. We're obsessed with your health, honey.

MICHAL

We care about downward-fucking dog.

VERA

We're downright devoted to it! It's a home base you can always return to throughout your cycles, like a flat. You just... lay down flat-

MICHAL

Most of our classes we spend, instead of trying other positions, entirely in downward dog.

VERA

And shavasana. That's called corpse pose.

MICHAL

In hot yoga, you end every session with corpse pose.

VERA

What's your end pose, honey, and step-by-step sequence preceding it?

VANEKA

Oh, um, I've actually been focusing on the present, currently-

MICHAL

Fran. Man. We're so sorry to hear that.

VERA

All of us, honey, especially our Siri; she just began crying, can't you hear?

*(Holding her phone close)*

We'll tend to her shortly, but you are our first-and-foremost priority. Because if you can't care for yourself, how can you expect to care for your Siri?

MICHAL

We're obsessed with your health, Fran.

VERA

We're in love with hot yoga.

And - oh my god - we can teach it to you right now!

VANEKA

What? Um, thanks, but, you don't have to-

MICHAL

Dude! We absolutely, totally must.

VERA

Let's do it, Fran. You'll be obsessed with it.

*(VERA and MICHAL help VANEKA bend over and pose, erotically and ridiculously. They can ad lib lines of motivation, and she of hesitance.)*

*(Eventually, ENTER ALEK, sloppily, puffing on a cigarette with his pitcher of beer.)*

ALEK

Fran, little lady, come on!!! The side salads need tossed! The utensils need folded in napkins! The napkin salads want folded! The side utensils want tossed! The coffee MACHINE NEEDS FIXED!!!

*(Beat. The Gen-Zers and middling Millennial freeze. The Boomer takes in the sight.)*

*(After a moment, he scoffs.)*

ALEK, cont'd.

Millennials. *Legrační.*

### III: ***Critical Acclaim***

AT RISE: VANEKA struts into the cafe, newly efficient, confident, business-oriented. She flaunts yoga clothes, a mat in her tote. Hardly before seated, she pulls out her laptop, checks for Wifi, then calls out:

VANEKA

Excuse me. Hello? *Pane vrchni?*

*(Immediately annoyed, raising in arrogance)*

*Ó můj bože,* I will post a terrible review of this crusty old establishment, and I've got a follower base massive as a black hole. You call yourselves a trendy coffee shop, but you've clearly been here a hundred years...

*(ENTER ALEK, busy.)*

ALEK

Hello, ma'am. I am so sorry to keep you waiting. So so very sorry. I'll fetch whatever you want and bring it over as fast as possible. What can I get you?

VANEKA

*(Totally seriously - this is all satirical)*

I'll take The Wifi Special, and one vanilla caramel mocha latte with soy milk and chocolate swirls and extra foam on top. Skim. I'll also take a slice of your avocado toast. Mashed up in a bowl.

ALEK

Coming right up. The Wifi server is the name of the establishment.

VANEKA

Alright, now I need the password. What's the word?

ALEK

Run.

VANEKA

Excuse me?

ALEK

The password is run. Like the boss says run, and... Old proverb. Never mind.

VANEKA

Alright.

ALEK

Sorry, ma'am. Thank you, ma'am.

*(HE EXITS. VANEKA works fervorously for a moment on her phone and computer. She maybe snaps a couple pictures of the cafe, but then-)*

PHONE

Keep walking.

VANEKA

What... ?

PHONE

You have not yet arrived at your... Keep walking, you have not yet arrived...

*(Its words fade out, distorted, as it dies.)*

*(SHE stares at it.)*

VANEKA

Shit. Dead. Oh, well.

*(Sighing, VANEKA takes out her charger and plugs phone into laptop. As it charges off this life source, she - void of emotion - moves forward, lies down flat on her back in corpse pose, and, from this position, hits off a juul.)*

*(El fin.)*