Jean-Marie Apostolidès

The Hacienda Must Be Built

Theatre
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Translated from French by Anne-Marie Trépanier
Cast of Characters

Ivan Chtcheglov,
25 years old, former member of the Lettrist International

Pierre Elliott Trudeau,
40 years old, future Prime Minister of Canada

Zifolo,
Midget in his thirties

Hospital patients,
Mental patients of various ages and conditions

The action is situated in France, at the La Chesnaie psychiatric clinic in Chaillies. The present scene takes place in August 1959.

The transcription and translation of the play is only partial. Here is the first scene of the second act.

SECOND ACT

Ivan's bedroom. A large room with a wired window facing a park. The trees outside are full of leaves. An impression of freedom reaches us from the outside nature.

A hospital bed on wheels; a little table topped by a writing machine serving as a work desk; a two-doors closet. Zifolo's recorder is laying on the ground.

Scene 1

Ivan is lying on the floor on a gigantic sheet of paper. He's drawing what seems to be an imaginary map, using newspaper and magazine cutouts.

Someone knocks on the door. Ivan doesn't seem to hear anything.

Pierre Trudeau enters. He discovers Ivan, lost in the midst of creation and ignoring his presence. Pierre coughs to signal his presence.

IVAN: SHUSH! I'm running after some fleeing thought. (silence) Too late! I'll never get it back. One cannot win every time.

PIERRE: You're building the hacienda?

IVAN: How do you know?

PIERRE: The nurse told me.

IVAN: Maurice Tuvache? Poor man! He's a bit loony. Did you notice? Hanging out with fools all day... Did you know that he isn't really a nurse? It's a character he plays in order to justify his salary.

PIERRE: What's his job?

IVAN: Watch out! Do not cross the limit. Beyond that lies the unknown.

PIERRE laughing: You know, I've crossed many other frontiers that were certainly more dangerous.

IVAN: Look at that! A traveler?

PIERRE: Yes, I've traveled. I won't share the details.

As the author mentions in the foreword of the play, Trudeau and Chicheglov probably met in Paris in August 1959, previous weeks before Ivan was sent at the La Chesnaye asylum for psychiatric treatments.
PIERRE: Yes, I’ve traveled. I’ll keep the details for myself.

IVAN: Did you ever get to visit the center of the world? Never, did you? You are there, right now. You, who entered here, forget all hope. And forget what you think you might know about life. Ordinary laws no longer, exist in Raminagrobis’ kingdom. (Changing tone) Do you like Edith Piaf?

PIERRE: I know a few songs of hers.

IVAN: Bravo pour le clown?

PIERRE: Yes. What about it?

IVAN: It’s very important for me. I could listen to that song all day long. It always makes me cry. How about you?

Trudeau shrugs. It seems like he wants to leave, but is beholden by some kind of curiosity.

Ivan puts on a 45 rpm record on the record player. We can hear Edith Piaf’s voice singing the song of Louiguy and Henry Contet.

Trudeau is getting impatient and stops the record.

PIERRE: I’m not here to listen to your music. Let’s talk about what brings me.

IVAN: I know why you’re here. You’re stalking me, don’t deny it. He wants to know if our construction is moving on. Well, look by yourself. You can do your report. I’m still working on the plan, but the hacienda is moving forward. Without his help. That’s the proof that he wasn’t essential to the project. Tell him that too.

PIERRE: You’re wrong, Mr. Chtcheglov. I’m not here to spy on you.

IVAN: So, who are you?

PIERRE: Someone wondering in what kind of circus he just stepped in.

IVAN: You’re surrounded by lunatics, that’s for sure. The largest circus tent of all. There’s only one person who could’ve sent you here: Louis II de Bavière. Am I wrong?
PIERRE: It’s not him.

IVAN: How come? You’re not the King of Fools’ ambassador? You’re an impostor. Out, out, or I alert the Chailles garrison.

PIERRE: It won’t be necessary, I’m leaving right away.

IVAN: Too bad. I was just getting used to your face. We get passionate about people only to leave them loudly. You would make a superb clown, do you know that? I think you’re beautiful. Who sent you here?

PIERRE: Your friend, Sir Straram.

IVAN: Patrick sent you?

PIERRE: Exactly.

IVAN: You should’ve told me first. (silence) What’s your name?

PIERRE: Pierre Elliott Trudeau

IVAN: Did you come for afar?

PIERRE: From Canada.

IVAN: The snowy country. I’ve always dreamed of owning a small shack, lost in its white vastness, surrounded by silence and a few maple trees. The eternal whiteness of its infinite land scares me.

PIERRE: It’s not snowing all year long in Montreal, you know.

IVAN: Really? That’s some good news.

PIERRE: No. Right now, the weather is similar to your country’s.

IVAN: Did you arrived in a bark canoe, with indians full of feathers and animal skins?

PIERRE: No, I took the plane with business men. It’s more prosaic.

IVAN: How come a clown like you can afford that?

PIERRE: Let’s say that I’ve got enough money to buy a ticket.

IVAN: Good thing… Listen, I’m a bit shy to ask you such a thing, but I’m a bit broke right now. If you could lend me 20,000 francs, for some vital appliances…

PIERRE: Twenty thousands old francs?

At that time, Patrick Straram was living in Montreal, writing articles for Cité Libre, a journal founded by Trudeau. When he learned that Trudeau was going on a trip to Paris, he asked him to visit his old friend, Ivan Chtcheglov, whom he heard wasn’t doing well. Chtcheglov was interned shortly after meeting with Trudeau.
IVAN: Absolutely. I’ll return them to you, I promise. I’ll send them to Montreal as soon as I can.

PIERRE: Let me think about it.

IVAN: *pleading* If you please.

PIERRE: Do not insist, Mr. Chtcheglov, I told you that I would think about it. (*silence*)

IVAN: So, Patrick told you to come here?

PIERRE: Yes.

IVAN: *Sacre Patoche!* Are you two friends?

PIERRE: We entertain cordial and necessary relationships.

IVAN: You’re intriguing. I don’t know what’s hiding beneath your silences, but you intrigue me. Can we know your age?

PIERRE: Forty years old.

IVAN: And I’m twenty-five.

PIERRE: The same as Straram.

IVAN: Yes, we were almost twins. Our paths did cross at some point, did you know that? He went to the asylum of Ville-Evrard and I was sent to the one in Chailles. It’s our youth’s destiny. And we went from a bar to another, holding hands with various little girls, perishable, just like the narcotics we were on. All that was only relatively funny. (*silence*) So, you’re called Pierre Elliott Trudeau?

PIERRE: I already told you.

IVAN: Elliott is your second name?

PIERRE: It’s my mother’s patronym. Her ancestors were from Scotland. I added their name to mine.

IVAN: I see. We use the second first name here. To recognize the other insiders. Gil Joseph, Gaétan Marcel, Guy Ernest.

PIERRE: That’s so French… You always need to distinguish yourselves!

IVAN: What do you want? We can’t change. It’s our national character.

PIERRE: What about you, don’t you have a second name?
IVAN in an operatic voice: Ivan Vladimirovich! (regular voice) But they call me Gilles Ivain, like the Knight of the Lion.

PIERRE: I does not know.

IVAN: It's an old French folk legend. But I don't like this non-protected designation of origin anymore. The lion hurt me with its claws. What could the tomcat Alexander von Raminagrobis do against a lion? Even helped by Uncle Léon? The fight was too unequal. Gilles Ivain shall be forgotten. No trace shall be left of his passing in our capital. Good people, rest in peace. Gilles Ivain's phantom won't haunt you. Requiescat in pace.

PIERRE: Ivan or Gilles, I've got a precise mission, check on your condition. What should I tell Straram? Your silence worries him.

IVAN: Silence, my own personal snow. He shall sweep the snow in front of his door and the city won't be troubled no more. (He goes back to his cutouts)

PIERRE: Do you have any specific need? Can I do something for you?

IVAN: Do you know, Mr. Elliott Pierre Trudeau, that your questions are bothering me? It is I who ask questions.

PIERRE: Do you know, Mr. Ivan Chtcheglov, that your insolence is getting on my nerves? Madness doesn't excuse everything. My presence is annoying you? I won't bother you much longer. Patrick asked me to offer you some books. I'd like to, but you'll have to help me out. What do you read?

IVAN: Words, words, words.

PIERRE: We're not making much progress.

IVAN: At what time is the last train tonight?

PIERRE: At 10:40PM. I will take the previous one.


PIERRE: What's that? An avant-garde poem?

IVAN: No. Titles of books. You wish to offer me some? That was my list.

PIERRE: I take good note of them. I'm not sure I'll find them, but I'll do my best.

IVAN: I thank you. Sit on the ground, close to me. Don't be scared, I'm not dangerous. We should get to know each other.
PIERRE: We won't have enough time. I want to have dinner before taking the train.

IVAN: I advice you against the Chailles’ restaurant. They have a distasteful specialty. They serve the brain of the homeless people whose bodies are not reclaimed at the morgue. Almost raw. It’s disgusting. You could be contaminated.

PIERRE: Be serious.

IVAN: Alas, I’m terribly serious. What I’m telling you is the absolute truth. At the Centaure Hotel, the chef is a cannibal from New Guinea. Bear in mind that it’s the only restaurant of France where you can eat rat and human flesh. By special privilege. That explains there incredible success. Others fall back on beef, pork or lamb, poor innocent beasts. (secretly) It is said that young girls’ thighs are delicious. Fried, pan-seared, juicy, accompanied with spring vegetables and fresh parsley, it’s a wonder. Did you know that tender little girl is Louis II de Baviere’s favorite meal?

PIERRE: I don’t understand a thing of what you’re saying.

IVAN: I’m not surprised. It’s easy to get lost in the winding folds of the human soul, don’t you think? Especially in the soul of a tyrant whose golden rule is secrecy. And you, what is your secret? Go ahead, tell me.

PIERRE: Listen, Ivan, I’ve got nothing against lettrist humor, but I feel like I’m outside of all that. I’ve got to leave you. It was a pleasure meeting you and I’ll try to find your books. Farewell.

IVAN: You leave without giving me money? I need so little. Ten thousand francs will do. Five thousand? Here, give me a thousand bucks and I leave you alone.

PIERRE: Another time.

IVAN: Then you can’t leave. Not without telling me your secret. I’m waiting for your confession. I won’t repeat anything to anyone. I’m as silent as a grave.

PIERRE: Leave me alone or I call the nurse.

IVAN: Go ahead, call Maurice! I won’t leave you alone until you confide. Who are you really, mister Pierre Elliott Trudeau?

PIERRE: Who am I? You mean, from what background do I come from? Why would you give a damn?

IVAN: I want to know your secret activities?
PIERRE: What business of yours is my life? I owe you nothing, son. I came all the way here to please your friend but that’s enough. Who do you think you are?

IVAN: Don’t get mad, it’s just a game. I owe you an apology if I hurt you in any way. I just wanted to get to know you. Hence my questions. Will you hold it against me?

PIERRE: No. You’re not responsible for your state of mind.

IVAN: Treat me as a friend, not as a fool. Don’t you want to play?

PIERRE: Play what?

IVAN: I want to know more about you. I like life histories. I bet yours must be exciting.

PIERRE: If you’re expecting a revelation, there won’t be any. I’m a very simple man, I don’t hide any secrets.

IVAN: Really?

PIERRE: Yes. I’ve got a career. I think, I write.

IVAN: Never work. Remember the inscription on the wall, rue de Seine: “Ne travaillez jamais”. One of Louis II de Bavière’s noblest directive.

PIERRE: I already told you that I didn’t know your monarch.

IVAN: A cruel ogre who devours those who get too close to him. Do you like witticism?

PIERRE: I usually do.

IVAN: Then you shall enjoy this unique moment. We’re in the middle of a farce, you see. Neither you nor I really exist. We believe we exist but it’s a mere illusion. We’re only two characters created by a sadistic author who manipulates us and whose name we’ll never know. And the last act is pretty bloody, are you aware of that?

PIERRE: I am fully aware of it, since I entered this room. I took you for a madman… Your delusion hides a bit of wisdom.
Fig. 1. Willem Willemsz. van der Vliet. A Scholar in His Study with Figures with Masks, possibly an allegory. 1627. Oil on canvas. 58 1/8 by 44 1/8 in.; 149 by 112 cm.
Source: Sotheby's
IVAN: Don't get me wrong, I am a complete fool. But it's about time the blind people like you take the insane by the hand if they want to figure out their way. Do not fear the shadows. We are only at the beginning of our journey. You still have a long way to go in the dark, Master Pierre. All passengers for no-where land, aboard! Watch out for the departure. (*He imitates the departure of a train*)
But before you go, your papers! I shall repeat my question: who are you, Mr. Trudeau?

PIERRE: I am a Professor of Law at University of Montreal. That's what you want to know?

IVAN: What a coincidence! I am, on my part, Professor of Lawlessness. I'm preaching for the revolution.

PIERRE: I do as well. But the revolution I defend is a quiet one.

IVAN: Then it's not a real revolution.

PIERRE: We have experienced much drama in the past! That's enough!

IVAN: Master Pierre is into politics?

PIERRE: Yes. I have a few ideas about the future of my country.

IVAN: Tell me more about it. I don't know much, except for what Patrick and Henry de Béarn told me.

PIERRE: What did they tell you?

IVAN: Patrick told me about the Chief.

PIERRE: The Prime Minister? Maurice Duplessis?

IVAN: Yes.

PIERRE: He's done his time, like most people from his party. We must turn the page now.

IVAN: Straram wrote to me one day that there was not one country but two, living besides each other like two solitudes. Is that true?

PIERRE: Yes. Since they ignore each other's language, people do not talk to each other. They let images invade them. And those images, they are scary. They should be tame.

IVAN: Two solitudes cannot make a country. It's like a couple in which the man and the woman do not speak the same language. They're better of getting a divorce.
PIERRE: It's also my point of view. Sooner or later, we will have to separate, upon the condition that the divorce is made in a friendly manner, not through the use of weapons.

IVAN: No revolution can succeed without spilling rivers of blood. Think about Russia. Do you think that the Bolcheviks would've won without a civil war? The tsar would still be running the Kremlin if it wasn't of the Red Army.

IVAN: You're familiar with China?

PIERRE: I visited it in 1949.

IVAN: Before Mao Tse-Toung? How was that?

PIERRE: From what I saw? Total anarchy. I was coming from Hong-Kong, I sneaked in in the area still belonging to Kuo-min tang. I went to Shanghai. The Red Army was on the other shore. I wish I could've stayed to catch the invasion of the city, but they announced a truce between the factions. And so I left. The truce wasn't meant to last! Right after my departure, the Red Army was entering Shangai.

IVAN: You've been through many adventures!

PIERRE: More than you can imagine.

IVAN: Yet you haven't seen the revolution.

PIERRE: I saw it from afar when I was in China.

IVAN: As a spectator. But you've never seen the storm that sweeps away all certainties.

PIERRE: That's true. And I do not want to.

IVAN: As for me, I have foreseen it, as a little boy, at the end of the war. Every day I have to face the chaos inside of me. When delirium seizes me, a permenant revolution goes on in my head.

PIERRE: I understand.

IVAN: I doubt it. (changing topic) What other country did you visit?

PIERRE: All the countries of the world, so to speak, except for Portugal, Romania and Paraguay.

IVAN: Even the Soviet Union?

PIERRE: I went there many times.
IVAN: I'm strangely drawn to foreign countries. The Prince of Béarn wanted me to join him in Caracas, but I didn't dare. Basically, I am a proponent of psychogeography, that's all.

PIERRE: What’s the difference with the traditional geography?

IVAN: I'm travelling through mental explorations.

PIERRE: That’s also important.

IVAN: I'm afraid of losing myself completely.

PIERRE: I get scared sometimes too. I'm not afraid of change, not even of revolution. I'm mostly scared of the influence I have on people. They listen to me. My words become oracles when I was only giving advice. The power we have on people is frightening.

IVAN: Yes. That's why I'm escaping. (changing topic) Henry told me about the priests of Quebec. Some damn wags, he thought, thickheaded, filthy, duplicitious, uneducated, desiring above all to maintain their power over an ignorant people.

PIERRE: The picture is not as black. Without them, French culture would've disappeared a while ago from the North-American continent.

IVAN: Do you write down your ideas to disseminate them?

PIERRE: Yes. We publish a journal with a few friends. Straram writes articles for us from time to time. I also have written one or two books.

IVAN: Master Pierre is a writer?

PIERRE: I don't consider myself a writer. At best, I'm an observer who writes. It's the best way to awaken people.

IVAN: My situation is the opposite of yours. You publish, but you are not a writer. I am a writer, but I don't publish Except when the crazy king takes hold of the content of my drawers to feed his guard dogs.

PIERRE: I don't understand.

IVAN: There's nothing to understand. Words, words, words, only words.

PIERRE: However, you're a writer? Your nurse told me about a play.
IVAN: We're preparing a surprise for Christmas. A real spectacle, a dangerous one! Because it’s moving, because it uses living instruments, real theatre can illuminate shady areas where life keeps stumbling. We must believe in a sense of life renewed by theatre, where people make themselves master of what is yet unborn, and give life to it. And everything that is yet unborn can still arise, provided that we do not satisfy ourselves into being petty recording organs. I cannot say more about it, but I hope that my name will be remembered in the history of stage setting.

PIERRE: I wish it for you. That’s it, my dear Ivan, we said everything to each other. Now I need to go.

IVAN: What are you going to do in Paris? It’s an accursed city, promised to destruction like Sodom and Gomorrah.

PIERRE: I need to meet a politician from my country, a member of the opposition.

IVAN: Politics can wait. Stay with me, please. You’ll take the last train.

PIERRE: It’s impossible. I don’t want to skip dinner.

IVAN: Stay. I will offer you drinks and food. For free. Please, do not abandon me.

PIERRE: I will send you your books.

IVAN: Don’t you understand? It is hell here. You are the only person I’ve met in months. I have no one to talk to. Never. I only talk to masks that reflect my insanity. You, however, you talked to me from man to man. If you leave, I’ll go back to my awful solitude. Pierre, Pierre what can I tell you to convince you? Don’t you have any pity for the poor clown?

PIERRE: I will come back.

IVAN: You know you won’t. Think about it. Tonight is our only chance to explore new territories. You believe you know the entire world, but you’re wrong. I will lead you to other worlds that are so different, so improbable, as light as soap bubbles, merry as Easter mornings. Come with me in the unknown. I’m scared all alone.

PIERRE: Let me go.

IVAN: Not before you promise me to take the last train. Promise me. Promise!

PIERRE: Well, ok. I will stay with you until tonight.
IVAN: Thank you, thank you. Come, I authorize you to cross the last circle. Give me your hand. You are now in the saint of the saints. You initiation can begin. All the secrets from the immaterial worlds will be revealed to you. And with them, the power to govern.

PIERRE: That's too much!

IVAN: You need to replace Maurice Duplessis.

PIERRE: He's firmly seated to his throne of Prime Minister.

IVAN: We will evict him.

PIERRE: Yes, in the next elections.

IVAN: No, we're going to eject him right away.

PIERRE: How?

IVAN: By a magic ritual.

PIERRE: That's still a game, right? I don't believe in magic.

IVAN: Let's try it anyway. I'm quite knowledgeable. Do you have a portrait of the Chief?

PIERRE: No. I only have a picture of my father. I always keep it with me.

IVAN: Give it to me, it will be useful. We will do a metagraphy.

PIERRE: What is that?

IVAN: An imaginary portrait. A collage if you prefer, but a metaphysical collage. Hence it's name, metagraphy. It allows you to capture the spirit of a man, a place or an event and to glue it on paper. With metagraphy, I reveal what was previously invisible.

Ivan take out some paintings from his closet. He installs a new sheet of white paper on the wall. Little by little, it will be covered with inscriptions, stains and a human figure representing Maurice Duplessis.

IVAN: Give me a hand. Cut out what suits you in these old newspapers. Our action in the arts is only the outline of a sovereignty we wish to have on our own adventures, given to common fortuity. There you go. The metagraphy is taking form. Can you feel the truths it is hiding? How are we going to call it?

PIERRE: Portrait of the Chief!

IVAN: Exactly.
fig. III. James Ensor (1860–1949). Masques regardant un jeu de cartes (Masks Looking at Playing Cards). 1896. oil on canvas. 10 3/5 x 16 inches (27 x 41 cm). Source: Peter Freeman, Inc.
PIERRE: What’s the next step?

IVAN: First, have a drink. Alcohol is forbidden here, but I always have some supplies. Cheers, dear Pierre. *On vous apprendra à boire avant votre départ.* The ice is broken.

PIERRE: Cheers, my dear Ivan.

*The storm that had been heard during the first act strikes again, more violently than before.*

PIERRE: Aren’t you cold?

IVAN: Explorers have to fight against cold, wind, obscurity and isolation. A departure towards polar regions is a real adventure! *L’air pince rudement.* Il fait très froid. The air pinches crudely. It is very cold.

PIERRE: You talk as if you had lived your whole life with us, in the Great North!

IVAN: Only in my dreams. Often. I travelled places where explorers get lost. Many difficulties, they face, and how many died unable to triumph!

PIERRE: To cross the fields of ice, we use the sled.

IVAN: I know. But the surface of polar ice is not as smooth as the ice of the ponds where we skate in winter. It bristles in small crests; it is cracked with crevices that we cross by carrying the sled.

PIERRE: So many pitfalls to avoid! It’s worst than a political career where you constantly risk to fall in a hatch.

*The storm ceases suddenly.*

IVAN: The polar explorers have confronted those difficulties in full knowledge of the cause. They left of their own free will, for the benefit of science, knowing the destiny that was threatening them. Therefore we can salute them as authentic heroes.

PIERRE: Yes. Otherwise more audacious than Sir, this coward who wishes the world could never change. Novelty horrifies him. And yet, it gets closer to him, fearsome, immeasurable. Beware, the storm is coming, Maurice!

IVAN: Regarde cette photo, Pierre. Our work is beautiful. Provocative. Mysterious. (*He takes the picture of Trudeau’s father and glues it to the metagraphy*) Portrait of the Father!

PIERRE *correcting*: Portrait of the Chief!
IVAN: It’s all the same.

PIERRE: No. I lost my father, I know the difference.

IVAN: You and I, we are two father orphans. Did you love you father?

PIERRE: I admired him a lot.

IVAN: Well then, focus profoundly. Think about your father, as I think of mine. That’s it?

PIERRE: Yes.

IVAN: Now, convert your love for him in hatred for the Chief. Do you feel your hatred for Duplessis?

PIERRE: I can feel it.

IVAN: If you want to be efficient, it must be as pure as your love.

PIERRE: My hated is as pure as my love

IVAN: Repeat after me: I want the death of the Chief!

PIERRE: I want the death of the Chief.

IVAN: As I wanted my father’s death.

PIERRE: That’s not true. I adored my father. He was a great man.

IVAN: Repeat: I want the death of the Chief as I wanted my father’s death.

PIERRE: I want the death of the Chief as I wanted my father’s death.

IVAN: O reche modo/ to edire/ di za/ tau dari/ do padera coco. There you go, it’s done. The Chief is going to die; it is you who killed him, like you killed your father. You are a free man now. You can lead other men, it is your turn to become the Chief.

PIERRE: You’re the devil, you’re possessed! I shouldn’t have entered your cave. You broke me, with your demented ritual. It is you who made me an orphan.

IVAN: We had to go through this to get to the point. Je suis l’esprit de ton père, condamné pour un certain temps à errer la nuit. Don’t regret your actions. One day, you’ll understand.

PIERRE: I am like a lost explorer.
IVAN: I know. In memory of the snowy streets of winter, and everything that separates us, here is a strange spectacle, where lost people find each other, in the light of our meeting faces.

PIERRE: But contact and flavour will not revive in this sumptuous but petrified image.

IVAN: Pierre, you and I are wading in the same shit.

PIERRE: What do you propose to get out of it?

IVAN: That we invent a new legend.

PIERRE: Which one?

IVAN: The legend of Benedict Benton. For the edification of future generations. Children of tomorrow will need legendary heroes.

PIERRE: I'm all ears. Does it take place in the North Pole?

IVAN: No, on the contrary. It's a story about a haunted castle.

PIERRE: Like the one of Louis II de Bavière?

IVAN: Less splendid. Benedict, on his side, doesn't own a royal treasure to satisfy his desire for majesty. Look at his castle, it's made out of jumble.

In English in the original text.

IVAN: Here is our hero, Benedict Benton himself.

PIERRE: Benedict, is that you?

IVAN: It is me, it is you, it is Mister Everyone and, at the same time, it is nobody. Here lies the drama of Benedict. He is nobody. He reigns on a vaccum. *Ô Dieu! Ô Dieu! Combien pesantes, usées, plates et stériles me semblent toutes les jouissances de ce monde!* Every night, he wanders in the deserted rooms of his palace. As he walks in slippers, he cannot even perceive the sound of his own steps. (Ivan manipulates the puppet)

PIERRE: What will happen of him?

IVAN: Precisely, nothing happens to him. Or so little. You first need to know that he buys a Louis XIII castle.

PIERRE: In France?
IVAN: Never! A character like him can only have a castle in Spain. But since he doesn’t like corridas, he destroys the castle stone by stone to rebuild it in South Africa. Like this. (As he talks, he builds imaginary constructions).

PIERRE: Why so far?

IVAN: Precisely because it is far. Countries of legend attract him. He admires his friend, the prince of Béarn, who had the strength to quit everything for the sumptuous life of tramps in Venezuela. Benedict first thought about rebuilding his palace at the carrefour Mabillon, in Paris, but there wasn’t enough room. And there are too many sparrows in the neighborhood. So he chooses the virgin forest. In the forest, no more sparrows, but monkeys, parrots, caimans and other unspeakable beasts. Here, do the monkey.

PIERRE playing the game: Benedict lives with those animals?

IVAN: Not yet. First, he hopes to reconquer the kingdom he have lost, the one he owned before the arrival of the usurper. It was a real paradise.

PIERRE: A lost paradise?

IVAN:

But the green Eden of our earliest loves,
our Eden of pure tremulous joy and bliss
is it now farther than the Asian shore?
can tears or cries recall each magic kiss,
or prayers or silvery words some eve restore
our Eden of pure tremulous joy and bliss?

PIERRE: In Eden, Adam was with Eve. Our Benedict is all alone.

IVAN: Pierre, your name and your sensibility are those of a stone. Benedict met Eve, his significant other. Open this box. Look inside. Pierre, your name and your sensibility are those of a stone.

PIERRE taking a second puppet: She’s very pretty.

IVAN: Her name is Emily. And your lover, what’s her name?

PIERRE: Let’s not talk about it. So Benedict and Emily are truly in love?
IVAN: No. On the contrary. Benedict, who believes he understood everything with his tiny brain, didn't understand a thing. Listen to the rest of his story. He meets Emily in the luxurious salons of the good city of Cape Town. He transplants her into the haunted castle, but the gift did not hold on. The couple falls apart, if you prefer. Emily is bored. She becomes hard to please, capricious. She orders meals for herself alone but doesn’t dare eating, drinks only pure milk one day, and the other a dozen cups of tea. She often persists in not going out, and the next day she suffocates, opens the windows, dresses in a light dress. Once she has molested her servant, she offers her gifts or send her outside for a walk in the jungle, hoping that she will get raped by a rutting gorilla. One day, Emily leaves Benedict. He thinks: “My wife is a whore. She thinks only of money.” (Pierre manipulates the puppet of Emily, following Ivan’s indications) She travels and then comes back, only to realize that she is still bored in this empty castle. Ô la plus perfide des femmes!

PIERRE: And Benedict, what does he do while his spouse is travelling and spending money?

IVAN: Him? He sings melancholic melodies while playing harpsichord.

PIERRE: And how does end this wonderful tale?

IVAN: Very sadly, like any tragic farce. The servants of the castle leave one after the other. All that is left is an old nigger, half-idiot, with whom Benedict sings negro spirituals all day long. Little by little, the virgin forest invades everything. Birds build their nest in the porcelain vases of the living room, gorillas settle down in the nuptial room, caimans move forward, insidiously, to take over the bathroom, plonk, plonk, plonk! Take a look around you. You see the caimans? Here, here. And look at the lianas and the incredible trees that invade everything around! Their interlocking branches make a barrier that blocks the access to any visitor. No entry!

PIERRE: It’s a little bit sad.
IVAN: Shall we play another game?

PIERRE: Let’s drink first. Cheers, Emily!

IVAN: Cheers, Benedict!

Ivan puts back Piaf’s song. We hear the second part.

As for the first time, but with irony, Trudeau interrupts the record after the chorus.

PIERRE: Let’s stop the song and do another metagraphy. With the cubes, we will build a city.

IVAN: Yes! An impossible city. Cheers! (They drink again) There’s no more temple of the sun. Between the legs of the passers-by, the dadaists would’ve like to find an adjustable wrench, and surrealists a crystal cup. It’s lost. Pierre, we are bored in the city, we must work tirelessly to discover more mysteries.

PIERRE: We will build a city like never before.

IVAN: Here, you have all that’s needed.

PIERRE: Don’t be such a , let’s get to work. Don’t always count on others. We must build the hacienda.

IVAN: The hacienda is a quest. No one knows where it leads.

PIERRE: To the impossible city! Follow me, I will guide you.

IVAN: You?

PIERRE: It is my turn. Politics is my expertise.

IVAN: We don’t know the way to the city. We must explore the unknown through poetry. The dérive is the opposite of politics, where one always knows where it leads.

PIERRE: I’ll tell you a secret, son: all political science consists in making the governed people believe that we know the solution to their problem and to let things happen. Time can fix everything. Sir has been using this method for more than twenty years. I can imitate him, for once.
Tu penses, donc je te suis.

IVAN: Politics and poetry are opposed in their methods and their goals. Tonight, poetry holds the reins. You must follow me, not the opposite.

PIERRE: Alright. You think, therefore I am (following) you.

IVAN: City people believe they get away from cosmic reality, they don't dream more for that. The reason is obvious: dream has its point of departure in reality and realizes itself in it. We must exceed all this.

While speaking, both men arrange the remains of paper on the floor with cardboard boxes, newspapers cut outs, matches, etc. They create a fragile and fabulous playground.

PIERRE: What organization are you thinking of for our city? We need to dub, dub, and rub-a-dub!

IVAN: It is made out of different neighborhoods, separated from one another. Rotating plates, if you'd like. The neighborhoods will all have different atmospheres. It is up to us to invent them. Got it?

PIERRE: Do you think I'm stupid?

IVAN: Each neighborhood needs to correspond to the diversity of feelings we encounter in daily life. Here, I build the neighborhood of happiness, dedicated to inhabitation.

PIERRE: And on my part, I will build the historical neighborhood, where one can find museums, schools, universities. University is very important for a career.

IVAN: Look. Do you see this place? It will be the noble and tragic neighborhood, for wise children. Don't drink too much Peter.

PIERRE: I don't drink too much, Vania. And here, the useful neighborhood, because there has to be one. It will include a hospital, grocery shops and all the services. Half of it will be at the ground level, the other half under ground. Thus, people will be able to move freely, even during winter. Tonight, I want to build a new world.

IVAN: Enjoy it, you cannot play God everyday. I would like us to imagine a Death district.

PIERRE: For dying?

IVAN: No, to live in peace.

PIERRE: I prefer that.

IVAN: I am a grave, don't forget that.
PIERRE: I got it. I will build the factory neighborhood. We will group them in the same district, it will be easier to collect the taxes. Because industrialists will support the rest of the population. We must be realistic. Come on, give me the money!

IVAN: Speaking of money…

PIERRE: Again?! I told you I would think about it. I'm not leaving yet, am I?

IVAN: I'm afraid you will forget.

PIERRE: I will not forget.

IVAN: 20,000 francs, did we agree? (changing topic) What would you think of a grim neighborhood?

PIERRE: Describe it to me.

IVAN: It will soundly replace the mouths of hell that some peoples use to have in their capital city. Our grim neighborhood will not need to harbor real dangers like traps, dungeons or landmines. No. I see it as difficult to approach, horribly decorated with shrill whistles, alarm clocks, intermittent sirens going on at an irregular pace, monstrous sculptures and mechanical motor-driven mobiles.

PIERRE: We will call them auto-mobiles!

IVAN: Exactly. It will be dimly lit by night and strongly during the day using an exaggerated reverberation phenomenon. At the center, the “Place of the Appalling Mobile”. Through the exploration of the grim neighborhood, children will quickly learn not to fear the nerve-racking events of life, but to make fun of it.

PIERRE: We must build the hacienda. But there’s still one neighborhood missing.

IVAN: Which one?

PIERRE: The Monarch's neighborhood.

IVAN: Louis II de Bavière?

PIERRE: Him or another.

IVAN: No. I'm sick of all those usurpers and ogres ogling at the swimmers at the swimming pool, rue des Fillettes. I want to forget Paris with its rue Sauvage. And the police station on rue du Rendez-vous. Forget and forget and forget.
PIERRE: Forget everything. The medical and surgical clinic and the free employment agency on the quai des Orfèvres.

IVAN: The artificial flowers, rue du Soleil.

PIERRE: The Caves du Château hotel.


PIERRE: The Epoch hotel.

IVAN: And the strange Doctor Philippe Pinel statue, benefactor of the insane, in the last evenings of summer. (he drinks)

PIERRE: But we need a king.

IVAN: So, it will be you. You, you will be the king.

PIERRE: You think so? No, not me. Only you can be the king.

IVAN: Certainly not. I don't have what it takes to be a king! But you, you have it, I can see it.

PIERRE: What? You think I have what it takes to be a king?

IVAN: Yes, you, you. I can see it: you're dying to be a king. We can hear it in your voice. It's not only me, everyone can see it. Ask the bourgeois. One day, you will sit down at the kings' table.

PIERRE: And you?

IVAN: Me Sir? I am from another country.

PIERRE: My enemy?

IVAN: Not your enemy, the stranger. And now, the locked-up fools' national anthem .

Ivan puts Piaf's record back on. We hear the end of the song and the two men sing at the top of their lungs.

They loudly add their applause to the ones ending the song.