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“Don’t be Ridiculous!”

It seems the endgame for Donald Trump is turning into the script for a farcical play on Broadway or the West End stage. What could be more appropriate than the final act to begin on the concrete paving, outside the roller doors of *Four Seasons Total Landscaping*, with a crematorium stage left and *Fantasy Island* sex shop, in flashing lights to the right! Then a man with a megaphone wanders on, dressed in underpants, carrying the nation’s flag,

It’s a farce which pits powerful politicians, supported by compromised lawyers, against the media. One could well imagine the late Paul Eddington pulling together his masterly talents to portray the inept and somewhat tarnished Rudy Giuliani (Already seen as a discredited lawyer trying to dig up dirt on Biden in Ukraine, then outed by Sacha Baron Cohen - in the guise of Borat – during the previous act).

"Don't be Ridiculous" exclaims the bumbling Giuliani, in response to the announcement from a reporter - played by Nigel Hawthorne (also like Eddington, of *Yes Minister* fame) - that the media has just declared Joe Biden, President Elect.

"Which station called it?" queries Giuliani.

"Well actually sir, they all did," replies the reporter.

The Four Seasons affair is one of countless sendups in circulation, each one of them intent on ridiculing a man who is already *'on his back and flailing like an obese turtle in the hot sun'* (an off-the-cuff description of Trump by CNN's Anderson Cooper). Though perhaps to date - as the wildest card in the pack - it is this impromptu presser in front of the hastily sloganized metal doors that hits home hardest, re-directing the power of social media back onto one of its main protagonists ... to haunt and belittle him.

We have begun at the end of our stage play, where the results of the American election are being fought over like customers fight over dwindling supplies of toilet paper in a pandemic, even though the supermarket owner has already decreed who gets the rolls. Embarrassing to watch and degrading for the people involved.

Turning back to the start of our play, an appropriate scene springs from Kazuo Ishiguro's novel of renown, *Never Let Me Go*, when 11-year-old Tommy has a tantrum on the sports field, much in the same way that Donald Trump might burst his boiler in The Oval office, or on twitter. The story is narrated by one of a group of girls, watching from a window, as Tommy is goaded by the boys after not being selected for the team.

"It's coming. Hold it" says one of the girls. *"Seven seconds, six, five ..."*

The narrator continues: *"Tommy burst into a thunderous bellowing, then he began to scream and shout, a nonsensical jumble of swearwords and insults ... there was Tommy going on and on and although at first we just rolled our eyes and tried to ignore it, in the end we were back up at the window again."*

There is also a short video doing the rounds where a Trump lookalike is bouncing on a ball surrounded by other children in a playgroup scene, when an elderly man (looking not unlike Joe Biden) comes along and tells the Trumpian figure it is time to go. Then the bellowing starts and the tugging and falling about, as Joe attempts to drag Donald, hollering, and yes flailing, to the exit door.

With Ishiguro's words and the video footage we have the core substance for the first act of the play. Where the words hit home so exactly to depict the Trump era is when the girls try to dispel the tantrum from their minds, but can't; within minutes they are back at the window, unable to ignore the attention seeker's performance. Like Tommy in fiction, Trump plays his role to perfection in reality, keeping himself forever in the limelight, aware that people are unable to resist looking, again and again, to see what might be the next insult, the next aberration, to come from his pursed lips ... or nimble fingers!

Our stage play – *'Don't be Ridiculous!'* – is divided into three acts: the first depicts Donald Trump, his background and his character; the second skims through the things he has attempted to do - or undo - during his time in office; and the third focuses on the tumultuous election, leading to the finale at Four Seasons Total Landscaping.

Our stage play has a musical underscore, again drawn from a marvelous variety of melodious sendups that bounded across our social media platforms during the 2020 election year. First up, *The Lion Sleeps Tonight* or at least its parody: *In the White House, the mighty White House, The Liar Tweets Tonight*. Then after the first intermission we are led into the second act by Randy Rainbow's brilliant take on the Pirates of Penzance song: *A Very Stable Genius* (with lyrics to match these nonsensical times). Finally, to accompany the finale we swing along with Frank Sinatra and *New York, New York: Start spreading the news ... He's leaving today!*

From the beginning of the play, the untruths mouthed by its central character are logged on two giant counters, positioned at either side of the stage, each new number preceded by the sound of a tolling bell (a crowing cock may have been even more

appropriate). The audience quickly catches on - as the lies come thick and fast from the pursed lips of our excessively orange-faced, lead actor - and by the second act they are shouting out each number, in unison, as it clicks over. From real estate occupation rates to tax declarations of non-profit in the first act, then on to the Obama *birther lie* and inauguration crowd numbers in the second, through to falsehoods related to Covid-19 and election fraud during the third. They plus many other blatant lies are all there, spouted by our child-like actor/president and his entourage of enablers, including Bill Barr and Roger Stone. But in the end, it all boils down to Giuliani seeking inspiration from the heavens, while continuing to serve his master, by not conceding a lost election, in the fittingly unpresidential surroundings of *Four Seasons Total Landscaping*.

Four years ago, it would have been unthinkable to be describing the workings of an American presidency, driven by one man's ego – supposedly the man who holds the highest office in our universe – in such terms. Now it is almost as if we have been programmed to accept this way of working as standard practice. It has become the new status quo. To return to something like the normalcy of a world we knew just four years ago, when Barack Obama spoke incisively (and in an adult manner) about national and global issues, almost seemed like a dream that would never come to fruition. A wish that might never come true. But, belatedly perhaps, we have been granted that wish and it now becomes paramount that we do what we can to make sure the dream does not fade from fact, to become a fantasy once again, in the future.

And so, as the curtain falls on Giuliani appealing to the heavens, with the man in underpants holding the stars and stripes aloft and regurgitating presidential lies, an authoritative voice comes to the fore – beamed out to the audience - an adult in the room, talking about working through consensus and bi-partisanship to tackle real and urgent matters. This loud and impactful voice speaks in a mature way about how it can be possible to work together to not only confront the pandemic, but also address more deep-seated and longer term concerns, such as race relations, gender equality, migration and climate change.

The members of the audience had been treated to a night of tongue-in-cheek hilarity, but as they leave their seats and file out of the theatre, these are the sobering thoughts they hear coming from the speakers:

Citizens of the world.

It is time to put away the harsh rhetoric.

To lower the temperature.

To see each other again.

To listen to each other again.

To make progress, we must stop treating our opponents as our enemy.

We need to work with a new mandate.

We need to marshal the forces of decency and fairness.

To marshal the forces of science and of hope, for the great battles of our time:

The battle to control the corona virus.

The battle to build prosperity.

The battle to secure your family's health care.

The battle to achieve racial justice and root out systemic racism.

The battle to restore decency and defend democracy.

The battle to tackle climate change and save our world.

(N.B.: words used for the speaker voice-over at the end of the play adapted from the first speech to the nation given by Joe Biden, President Elect of The United States of America, 07.11.2020).

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Four Seasons Total Landscaping Post-Election Gallery

Image: stylecaster.com



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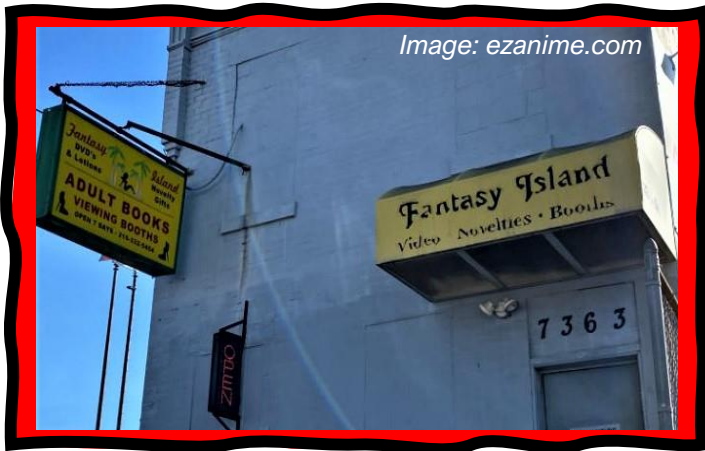


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How to make the best of a bad moment!