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Call Me Comrade

A Short Comedy

by

Ross Peter Nelson

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CHARACTERS

1W / 3M

SERGEI RABINOVITCH: *Male, late 20s. Functionary in the Russian Federation. A true believer in capitalism. Dressed in cheap, flashy clothes.*

DMITRY LEVENOV: *Male, early 50s. Deputy to Sergei. Nostalgic for an earlier time. Dress is a bit worn and out of fashion.*

LENIN: *Male, mid 50s. Dead.*

SAMANTHA HATHAWAY: *Female, early 40s. VP Marketing for Pepsi. Dressed to kill.*

SETTING

An office of the government of the Russian Federation, somewhere near Red Square

TIME

*Early 21st century
(Inspired by a news story dated Nov 2005)*

Call Me Comrade

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(Projected onto a scrim, we see a "Russian" newspaper with the headline: KALMYKIA OFFERS \$1M FOR LENIN, TOMB. As curtain rises, SERGEI is at his desk. On a table nearby lies the body of LENIN, covered with a tarp. DMITRY enters.)

DMITRY

Sergei Rabinovitch, are you're still here? You must have been in office all night.

SERGEI

Dmitry, I am making biggest deal of century.

DMITRY

I know you and your deals. Selling painting here, selling icon there. Maybe Japanese camera. Not so big deal. We used to call it black market.

SERGEI

No, my friend, this is revolutionary.

(SERGEI pulls away the tarp to reveal the body of LENIN.)

DMITRY

Comrade Lenin!

SERGEI

No more Comrade. Soviet era ended years ago.

DMITRY

But still, that is Vladimir Ilyich Lenin. What are you going to do with him?

(The phone rings. SERGEI holds up his hand for silence, answers the phone.)

SERGEI

Hello. Yes, it is...Really? I think you should reconsider...Just think of headlines, "McCartney and Lenin, together again for first time". You could bring him on to music "Back In USSR". Big scene with dancing girls.

(Sings.)

Moskva girls make me sing and shout.

(Speaking.)

OK...Look, you think about it. OK? *Da svidaniya.*

DMITRY

What's going on?

SERGEI

I'm going to sell him.

DMITRY

What?

(SERGEI grabs a newspaper from his desk.)

SERGEI

Look. Putin wants him out of Red Square. Kalmykia already offers 1 million US dollars, 29 million rubles. Maybe I sell him first.

DMITRY

Are you authorized?

SERGEI

Dmitry, listen to me. The world has changed. We don't wait for central party to authorize any more. We take initiative.

DMITRY

But...

SERGEI

Besides. Lenin was communist, right?

DMITRY

So?

SERGEI

Under communism, everything belongs to the people. I'm one of the people, so Lenin belongs to me. So I can sell him.

DMITRY

To Kalmykia?

SERGEI

To anybody. I am making calls all morning. I speak to Paul McCartney himself.

DMITRY

Paul McCartney? Wants comra...wants Lenin?

SERGEI

Is maybe. McCartney is maybe. Many are considering.

DMITRY

Many? Who else?

SERGEI

Disney is maybe. KFC is maybe. How do you think he'd look dressed in white?

(LENIN abruptly sits up.)

LENIN

Imperialism is the monopoly stage of capitalism.

DMITRY

What the hell?

SERGEI

Is for Disney. They like audio-animatronic. I have friend who wired him up to smart phone. Still has some bugs.

(He pushes LENIN back into a prone position.)

You laugh at my icons and Japanese cameras, but it pays off. Look at my clothes. Boss Hugo, Dominika Karan Novogrod, Ralph Lorenov. Top quality stuff.

DMITRY

Dominika Karan? I don't think that's right.

SERGEI

No, is real thing. No knock offs.

DMITRY

(Looking out the window.)

Do the tourists know he's not there? The line is getting long.

SERGEI

They're tourists. They're used to standing in line.

DMITRY

I miss standing in line. Remember in the old days? It was exciting. You'd get phone call "Fyodorovitch has meat today" and you'd run over to butcher shop and stand in line for hours, and when you got to the front, Fyodorovitch would say "Sorry. I have no meat. But I hear if you stand in line at Petyrovitch's, he has no milk."

SERGEI

You're an idiot if you miss that. Now we have shops full of bread and meat and DVD players.

DMITRY

And who can afford meat? Maybe if you're a mafia boss or his *tyolka*.

SERGEI

Don't worry. I'll buy you an entire cow when I sell Vladimir Ilyich. That reminds me, Dmitry, Sam from Pepsi dot com is coming. We need to be ready for him.

DMITRY

Why are you talking to all these Americans anyway? Shouldn't Comrade Lenin stay here?

SERGEI

Because, Dmitry Levenov, I am going to show these fat American roosters that they are no match for the wolves of the Russian forest.

DMITRY

Why don't you sell him to Kalmykia? They already offered twenty-nine million rubles. A sparrow in your hand is worth a chicken on the roof.

SERGEI

Don't you understand? Is capitalist way. Besides, I have already incurred certain expenses.

DMITRY

What do you mean capitalist way?

SERGEI

Look. How many bodies of Lenin are there in world?

DMITRY

One.

SERGEI

Exactly. So supply is fixed. If we increase demand, we increase price!

LENIN

(Sits.)

This true proportion between supply and demand ceased long ago to exist. It has passed into the stage of senility.

DMITRY

You think you're out for wool, Sergei, but maybe it's you who get sheared. What if there's no demand?

SERGEI

No demand? I have KFC. I have Paul McCartney. Plus, I just got e-mail from Sam at Pepsi dot com. He's on his way.

DMITRY

You can't divide up the bearskin until you've shot the bear. These Americans, what do they want with Vladimir Lenin?

SERGEI

Who knows why Americans do anything? Anyway, I want you at your desk when Sam from Pepsi dot com arrives.

(DMITRY exits. SERGEI goes to LENIN's body. He pushes it flat and tidies the body a bit. DMITRY returns. He is agitated.)

DMITRY
Sergei Rabinovitch!

SERGEI
What is it?

DMITRY
Sam. Sam from Pepsi is here.

SERGEI
Send him in.

DMITRY
Is not him.

SERGEI
Well is it or isn't it?

DMITRY
Sam is her. Is woman.

SERGEI
So what? All capitalists are created equal. Show her in.

(DMITRY exits and returns with SAMANTHA. She's wearing a power suit, but with the skirt cut short enough to show a fair amount of leg. DMITRY is in love.)

DMITRY
Sam from Pepsi, this is Sergei Rabinovitch, Undersecretary for Advancement of Capitalist Agenda.

SAMANTHA
Dobry den', Gaspodin Rabinovitch.

SERGEI
Zdravstvujte.

DMITRY
You speak Russian!

SAMANTHA
Only a little. Not quite enough to conduct business, I'm afraid.

SERGEI

Is not a problem. Your accent, by the way, is excellent. And you see, Deputy Levenov, she knows proper form of address. She says "mister" not "comrade."

DMITRY

She can call me Comrade.

SERGEI

But you must excuse me, I was not given your full name. How should I address you?

SAMANTHA

My name is Samantha Hathaway, but everyone calls me Sam.

SERGEI

A pleasure to meet you. My name is Sergei Rabinovitch, but everyone calls me Sergova.

(DMITRY coughs.)

SERGEI

This is my deputy, Dmitry.

SAMANTHA

Sergova. Dmitry.

DMITRY

Samantha? Like in Bewitched?

SAMANTHA

Pardon?

DMITRY

We have American television here. Is translated to Russian.

SERGEI

That will be all, Dmitry.

SAMANTHA

Oh, right. Bewitched. Yes, the very same.

DMITRY

And can you do nose wobble?

SERGEI

That will be all, Dmitry.

SAMANTHA

I'm sorry, Dmitry. I'm afraid I just have an ordinary nose.

DMITRY
Not at all, is lovely nose.

SERGEI
Deputy Levenov!

DMITRY
You will excuse me.

(DMITRY Exits.)

SERGEI
Please have seat.

(DMITRY enters with a tea service.)

DMITRY
Is custom to have tea before doing business.

SAMANTHA
How delightful. Thank you, Dmitry.

DMITRY
Also, we have Flipper.

SAMANTHA
Pardon?

DMITRY
I love Flipper.

(Sings.)
They call him, Flipper, Flipper, faster than...

SERGEI
That is all!

(DMITRY exits. SERGEI and SAMANTHA sip tea.)

SERGEI
You are here to make offer on Lenin, no?

SAMANTHA
Of course. We're very interested.

SERGEI
May I ask how much you are prepared to offer?

SAMANTHA

Well, Sergova, we're not looking at it as a straight cash deal. There's licensing and other issues to consider. But the total transaction could go as high as one point two million.

SERGEI

One point two million! Is outrageous. Is not even worth my time to consider.

SAMANTHA

(Rising.)

I'm so sorry. I didn't realize our offer would so unattractive to you. Please forgive me, Sergova, I didn't mean to take up your time.

SERGEI

(Stands.)

Wait. Wait. Perhaps I am too hasty. But I already have offer for two millions, I expected you to beat this offer by at least another half million.

SAMANTHA

Sergei, for two and a half million, we can get Chairman Mao. He's got twice the name recognition that Lenin does and he'd give us a huge entrée into the Chinese market. We're hardly going to pay that for Lenin.

SERGEI

Mao Tse-tung is for sale?

SAMANTHA

Sergei, I thought you called yourself a capitalist. Everything is for sale.

LENIN

(Sitting up.)

There are no morals in politics; there is only expedience.

SAMANTHA

Was that him?

SERGEI

Is OK. Some custom work for Disney.

LENIN

A lie, told often enough, becomes the truth.

SAMANTHA

That's fascinating. You know, he sounds a little bit like Dick Cheney.

SERGEI

The thing is, I have many offers to consider. KFC. Paul McCartney. I am talking to Walt Disney himself.

SAMANTHA

Himself?

SERGEI

Is through translator.

SAMANTHA

I don't think I can compete with that.

SERGEI

Mao Tse-tung was just peasant. Only Lenin is true revolutionary. Look, you make new soda? I give you free commercial message. "Pepsi soda. A revolutionary new taste,"

SAMANTHA

That's very good, Sergei, but you have competition. There's a rumor that Ho Chi Mihn is coming onto the market and Che Guevara is already on half the T-shirts in America.

LENIN

Everybody loves a revolutionary. Once they're dead.

SERGEI

Sam, let me tell you something. These guys, Che, Mao. They're just copycats, OK? Lenin was original big deal. He was revolutionary before these guys were even born. I tell you what, you buy Lenin you get whole body. Complete package, like you Americans say. And that's not all. I also give you one thousand liters of embalming fluid. Is secret formula. Keeps mold and fungus under control.

SAMANTHA

We make soda pop, Sergei, we know preservatives.

SERGEI

So, you think you're so smart, Miss American business person?

SAMANTHA

I think I'm aware of the realities of the situation.

SERGEI

I know what is going on. Some smart guy at Pepsi says, look, we send pretty girl to Sergei, maybe he'll give in. You think a pretty girl will make me stupid? Your offers insult me.

SAMANTHA

I guess that means you no longer want to talk to me?

(SERGEI ignores her, sits at his desk, grabs some paper and begin scribbling madly. SAMANTHA watches him for a moment, then walks out. SERGEI shows the copy to LENIN.)

SERGEI

So, what do you think of that, Vladimir Ilyich? For all your fancy theories, who is the one who's going to get rich? And I won't have to raise a finger, just sit back and watch the bidding.

LENIN

Capital isolated from production is parasitic.

SERGEI

Shut up.

(DMITRY enters.)

DMITRY

So, your big plan didn't work out.

SERGEI

What do you mean?

DMITRY

You insulted Sam from Pepsi.

SERGEI

How do you know?

DMITRY

She also told me that Walt Disney is dead.

SERGEI

It doesn't matter Dmitry, I have plan.

DMITRY

I'm sure.

This is Not the End of the Play
Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes