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Fall Guys

by

J.C. Svec

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Fall Guys

by J.C. Svec

Cast of Characters

JACK (KENNEDY); *the perfectly coiffed, physical embodiment of President John F. Kennedy*

FIDEL (CASTRO); *the physical embodiment of Cuban military dictator Fidel Castro*

SUSIE; *the somewhat ditzzy, scatterbrained secretary to President Kennedy*

ESPERANZA; *the hot tempered, irritated Cuban secretary to Fidel Castro*

NIXON (VOICE OVER ONLY)

Setting

October, 1962. Two individual desks sit side-by-side. They each have a table lamp and a small telephone console with two handsets attached to each console.

Properties

2 Telephone Consoles or at least 4 handsets

Cigar

Fall Guys

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AT RISE: Next to the stage right desk stands JACK, perfectly coiffed, dressed in a gray, pinstripe suit. Next to the stage left desk stands FIDEL, in his usual green military fatigues, beret, and combat boots. He wears heavy black-rimmed glasses while a cigar dangles from his mouth. SUSIE, in a conservative two-piece outfit and heels, and ESPERANZA, in a worn house dress and sandals enter and take their seats stage right and stage left respectively.

NOTE: JACK and FIDEL are never heard and their dialogue is implied through them 'speaking' into their handsets and over-exaggerating body language. SUSIE and ESPERANZA'S dialogue is the translation of what is being spoken by either JACK or FIDEL. Any phone effects, such as the rotary phone dial, busy signals, and ring tones are to be recorded.

JACK nods and SUSIE picks up her handset. She dials a long series of numbers. After several moments, ESPERANZA'S phone rings. ESPERANZA and FIDEL react to the ring and stare at their console. The phone continues to ring for some time. Finally, FIDEL and JACK emphatically point to their consoles. SUSIE hangs up as ESPERANZA picks up. JACK and FIDEL display their disappointment.

FIDEL instructs ESPERANZA to check the phone. She picks up the handset, waits for a dial tone, nods, and holds the handset out for FIDEL to hear. He arrogantly turns his head away from the desk. ESPERANZA slowly lays the handset back onto the console.
Silence.

SUSIE and ESPERANZA share long looks at JACK and FIDEL. JACK contemplates his next move. The two men begin bouncing on the balls of their feet then stop at the exact same time.
Silence.

JACK and FIDEL point to the consoles. SUSIE and ESPERANZA frantically dial their numbers and wait for the connection. The two women hold up their handsets echoing busy signals. The two men respond with frustration as the women hang up their headsets.

Silence.

JACK points to the console and raises his finger signaling 'one more time.' Just before SUSIE finishes dialing her number, FIDEL instructs ESPERANZA to leave. As she stands to exit, her phone rings. ESPERANZA and FIDEL stare down at the phone. FIDEL frantically gestures for ESPERANZA to sit and answer. She picks up both handsets, handing one to FIDEL. They exchange a nervous look. He encourages her to speak but all she can manage is heavy, nervous breathing. In disgust, SUSIE looks at her handset and slams it back down onto the console. ESPERANZA reacts to the deafening noise in her ear and slams her handset down. JACK and FIDEL stare at the women in disbelief. They proceed to reprimand the women who plead their case non-verbally. JACK calmly instructs SUSIE to make another call. SUSIE picks up her

handset and dials the long series of numbers. The ringing phone freezes FIDEL in the middle of his rage at ESPERANZA. He then points to the console. ESPERANZA sits and picks up the handset.

ESPERANZA, speaking with a Cuban accents answers.

ESPERANZA

(Tentative) Hello?

SUSIE

(Tentative) Hello?

ESPERANZA

Hello.

(FIDEL asks for and is handed his handset. A silence follows.)

SUSIE

(Unsure) Hello?

ESPERANZA

(Unsure) Hello.

(SUSIE and ESPERANZA look at JACK and FIDEL. The four individuals shrug their shoulders. JACK encourages SUSIE to continue.)

SUSIE

(Upbeat) Hel-lo.

(ESPERANZA looks at her handset incredulously.)

ESPERANZA

(Imitates SUSIE) Hel-lo!

(SUSIE covers the mouthpiece and gives JACK a thumbs up as ESPERANZA gestures 'crazy' to FIDEL. JACK motions he'll take over.)

[NOTE: From this point on, JACK and FIDEL act out their lines that are being translated by either SUSIE or ESPERANZA. There should be beats between exchanges to allow for the men's dialogue.]

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

So, what's new?

SUSIE

Not much – what's new with you?

(JACK nods his head.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(Intrigued) How are your Senators doing?

ESPERANZA

(Explains) Well, they're not necessarily my senators. They're the people's representatives, and like the people, they're pretty much on the edge of their seats right now. But they'll support the decisions of their President.

SUSIE

(Arrogant) I understand they are not the winning-est group of men, but when did your capitalist democratic government take control of them?

(JACK displays confusion.)

ESPERANZA

(Explains) The senators are a national, league team for the American public. If anyone controls them it is the voting populace.

SUSIE

(Confused) National League?

ESPERANZA

(Corrects) No. National. League of men.

SUSIE

(Annoyed) Yes, that's what I said. But, the National... League?

ESPERANZA

You're asking me a question?

SUSIE

Yes. The National League, not the American?

(JACK looks at his handset.)

ESPERANZA

(Emphatic) Of course, *American*.

SUSIE

(Confused) Then why did you say *National League*?

ESPERANZA

I didn't. You did.

SUSIE

So did you.

ESPERANZA

No, I didn't. I said National... league.

SUSIE

Are the Senators American or not?

ESPERANZA

By law they have to be!

(JACK instructs SUSIE to put them on hold.)

SUSIE

(As herself into handset) Please hold.

(In frustration, JACK lowers the handset to his side and FIDEL erupts in silent rage at ESPERANZA.)

ESPERANZA

(As herself to FIDEL) Si, el presidenté. Si. Si, el presidenté. Si. Si. Si, el presidenté.

(FIDEL calms himself and waits. JACK raises the handset to his ear and instructs SUSIE to return to the conversation.)

SUSIE

(As herself) Hello.

ESPERANZA

(As herself) Hello.

(FIDEL points to the console.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

(As herself) Please hold.

(FIDEL enjoys his sudden control.)

SUSIE

(To JACK) We're on hold Mr. President.

(JACK, hands on his hips, shakes his head in disbelief. FIDEL speaks into his handset. SUSIE listens in shock.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(As herself to JACK) Mr. President?

(JACK looks at SUSIE.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(Gasps) Mr. President... *(As herself)* He said something very... improper.

(JACK screams at his handset.)

ESPERANZA

(Yells) Cono su madre.

(JACK gives SUSIE the thumbs up as FIDEL flips ESPERANZA 'the bird.' Silence. JACK and FIDEL speak into their handsets.)

SUSIE AND ESPERANZA

What is it going to take to resolve our situation? *(Pause)* My situation? Your situation.

(The two men cross their arms and turn away from SUSIE and ESPERANZA.)

SUSIE AND ESPERANZA, *Continue*

(Cautious) Please hold.

(Silence. JACK speaks into his handset. ESPERANZA signals FIDEL to listen.)

ESPERANZA

We know that you have Soviet missiles pointed at the United States.

(FIDEL responds.)

SUSIE

Who says?

ESPERANZA

We have pictures.

SUSIE

So.

ESPERANZA

So?

SUSIE

Maybe we do and maybe we don't.

ESPERANZA

Fine. Let's just say you... might have them. If you do, and I'm not saying that's the case, what might you want to get rid of... them.

(Silence.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

What do you want?

SUSIE

What do you want?

ESPERANZA

I asked you first.

SUSIE

I'm the one with the missiles.

ESPERANZA

Aha!

(FIDEL slaps his forehead realizing what he's said. JACK jumps up and down with excitement. FIDEL speaks into his handset.)

SUSIE

(Soft) Jack?

(SUSIE points to JACK'S handset. He arrogantly puts it back to his ear.)

ESPERANZA

What can I do for you, Fiddie, ol' boy?

(Silence.)

SUSIE

(Serious) You can believe that I will finish construction, point one of my little babies at Florida and...KABOOM!

(The noise startles JACK into a new approach.)

ESPERANZA

(Happy) So, where were we? What was it you wanted? A few new automobiles? Money? How about some new clothes? We'll send you a Sears catalogue.

(Silence. SUSIE shrugs her shoulders.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

(*Kids*) You want Desi Arnaz back? (*Silence*) How about we clean up that mess we made on Bahia de Cochinas. Maybe plant a few new trees. Build a Howard Johnson's.

(*FIDEL finally responds.*)

SUSIE

(*Angry*) So you can throw another beach blanket bingo party?

(*The tension escalates.*)

ESPERANZA

It was a joke.

SUSIE

It was not funny.

ESPERANZA

Oh, relax a little.

SUSIE

You relax.

ESPERANZA

Don't tell me what to do!

SUSIE

I can do whatever I want.

ESPERANZA

Says who?

SUSIE

Says me!

ESPERANZA

Baby.

SUSIE

Big baby.

ESPERANZA

Riffraff.

SUSIE

Blue blood.

Marxist. ESPERANZA

Capitalist. SUSIE

Criminal. ESPERANZA

Democrat. SUSIE

You were a lousy ballplayer. ESPERANZA

And you were a lousy sailor. SUSIE

(JACK gasps and holds his handset at arms length. Silence.)

SUSIE AND ESPERANZA
(As themselves) Please hold.

(Both men begin to walk away but their handsets pull them back into place. FIDEL talks into his handset.)

SUSIE
(Resigned) Mr. President.

ESPERANZA
Yes.

SUSIE
You asked what I wanted.

ESPERANZA
(Encouraged) Yes.

SUSIE
I want the Senators.

(JACK appears confused.)

ESPERANZA
Which senator?

SUSIE

All of them.

(JACK bounces his head back and forth.)

ESPERANZA

There are a few Republican representatives I wouldn't mind sacrificing... but, that's just not possible. It's immoral, unethical, and, though a tempting offer, out of the question.

SUSIE

Mr. President, I don't think you understand.

ESPERANZA

(Preaches) Oh, I understand. You want me to hand over our government as a ransom for your renegade act of terrorism. The American public won't stand for it, the memory of our fore fathers won't stand for it, God won't stand for it and, lastly, I certainly won't stand for it.

(Silence.)

SUSIE

I want the Washington Senators.

ESPERANZA

The baseball team?

SUSIE

If you're still referring to them as such. Yes, the baseball team.

ESPERANZA

Mr. President, may I call you back?

(FIDEL nods his head.)

SUSIE

Of course.

(All parties hang up their handsets. JACK hands a little black book to SUSIE. He points at a section of the page it has been opened to and points to the console. SUSIE dials a series of numbers. The phone rings only once.)

NIXON (V.O.)

Hello, this is Milhouse, not the White House.

(SUSIE stares at her headset as JACK looks on.)

NIXON (V.O.), *Continues*

Kennedy, is that you again? Stop calling me you son-of-a—

(SUSIE slams down the handset. JACK motions to a different spot on the page. She locates the correct phone number and dials.)

SUSIE

(Into phone) Charlotte, this is Susie. *(Pause)* I'm fine how are you? *(Pause)* I'm sorry to hear that. *(To JACK)* Her Mom's in the hospital. *(JACK displays his annoyance.)* Um, Charlotte, this is kind of an emergency, is Mr. Short in for the President? Thanks.

(SUSIE hands JACK his handset. JACK'S body language ranges from desperate to explosive while pleading his case. JACK eventually hands SUSIE his handset.)

SUSIE, *Continues*

(To JACK) No deal?

(JACK shakes his head and reluctantly instructs SUSIE to call FIDEL. ESPERANZA answers her ringing console.)

ESPERANZA

(As herself into handset) Hello.

SUSIE

(As herself into handset) Hello. Please hold for the President.

(SUSIE hands JACK his handset.)

ESPERANZA

I'm sorry, but to sell an American interest to a foreign power is out of the question.

(JACK shrugs his shoulders in response to SUSIE'S glare. JACK continues.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

Therefore your request is out of the question.

(FIDEL takes his handset.)

SUSIE

I will pay top price.

ESPERANZA

And...

SUSIE

And?

ESPERANZA

Yes. And...

(FIDEL realizes what is missing from his offer.)

SUSIE

All right. I'll dismantle the damn missiles.

(JACK throws his arms up in frustration.)

ESPERANZA

If it was up to me, Fidel... can I call you Fidel?

SUSIE

If I can call you John?

ESPERANZA

Please, Jack.

SUSIE

Okay... Jack.

ESPERANZA

As I was saying, if it was up to me I'd be thrilled to unload the team. So would their owner. We both agree they're a national embarrassment. But... well, maybe in another time under different circumstances.

SUSIE

Force him.

ESPERANZA

Fidel, it doesn't work that way in the United States, remember?

SUSIE

I forgot. *(Silence)* Why?

ESPERANZA

Why? Why won't he sell?

SUSIE

Yes.

ESPERANZA

He won't sell to a communist.

SUSIE

My money's as good as the next comrade's.

ESPERANZA

He knows that. I know that.

SUSIE

I'll turn the you-know-whats around. I'll face them anywhere you want. South America? *(Pause)*
How about Mexico? Mexico! Who cares?

ESPERANZA

Fidel, I appreciate the offer. But we had that whole Red scare thing a couple of years ago and, well, people are still a bit... apprehensive about dealing with your kind.

SUSIE

How about Texas. Right up that son-of-a-bitch L.B.J. and Lady Bird's—

ESPERANZA

That's very generous, Fidel... and tempting. He's soused most of the time and, to be honest, would never know what hit him.

(The two men have a good laugh.)

SUSIE

You know Jack, you seem like a pretty decent fellow.

ESPERANZA

I'm getting the same feeling about you, Fidel.

SUSIE

What do you say the two of us just start pressing buttons and piss everybody off?

ESPERANZA

All we'd have to do is sit back and wait for the... fallout.

(Silence. The men then burst into hysterical laughter as the women remain very still and serious.)

ESPERANZA, *Continues*

So, Fidel, you weren't serious about buying the Senators, were you?

SUSIE

No, not really.

ESPERANZA

They'd probably have better attendance in Havana, that's for sure.

SUSIE

I'd call them the Havana Barbados.

ESPERANZA

The bearded ones. Very good. You're up on your Cuban.

ESPERANZA

If things had gone differently, we considered a vacation to your lovely country.

SUSIE

You and Mrs. Kennedy.

(JACK displays his embarrassment.)

ESPERANZA

Uhhh....

SUSIE

Oh ho, you dog, you.

ESPERANZA

Anyway, why offer to buy the team? If it was to break the ice between us, it sure succeeded.

SUSIE

I'd like to take credit but, no, not just that. *(Pause)* It's silly. I don't want to bother you.

ESPERANZA

Fidel, buddy, come on, we're sharing a foxhole under fire here.

SUSIE

(Hesitates) I guess I'm just feeling a little nostalgic. A little... melancholy. *(Pause)* Well, it's my anniversary.

ESPERANZA

Anniversary?

SUSIE

Twenty years ago the New York Giants offered me a contract to play baseball. It included a five thousand dollar signing bonus. I was a pretty good pitcher you know.

ESPERANZA

(Apologetic) I'm sorry about the ballplayer remark before. I've heard you had a pretty good curveball in your day.

SUSIE

Yes. Yes. I could always hit that outside corner. And a breaking ball, too. Low and in on the knees.

ESPERANZA

Your fastball?

SUSIE

Passable, only passable, I have to admit. *(Silence)* Imagine the world if I had decided to play baseball instead of becoming a lawyer.

ESPERANZA

It definitely would have put a different spin on world politics. *(Pause)* Is law school the only reason you didn't sign?

SUSIE

Stronger aspirations. For my country and my people. Besides, Batista had to be stopped. Be careful Jack, we have a lot of the same enemies. A lot in common.

ESPERANZA

Including our love for baseball.

SUSIE

The national game of Cuba.

ESPERANZA

And the national pastime of the American people.

SUSIE

What if my people had not invented the game?

(Silence.)

ESPERANZA

Fidel, we invented the game of baseball.

SUSIE

No, Jack, we did. From the Cuban game batos.

(The tension increases.)

ESPERANZA

You can't change history.

SUSIE

No, but I can make it. Our deal is off.

ESPERANZA

Deal, what deal? We had a deal?

SUSIE

Don't push me. You start pushing; I'll start pushing, if you know what I mean.

(FIDEL frantically pantomimes pushing buttons.)

ESPERANZA

You start pushing buttons and I'll start pushing buttons. And I've got a lot more of them than you and that bald headed pinko in the Kremlin.

SUSIE

You wouldn't dare.

ESPERANZA

Oh, wouldn't I.

(Silence.)

SUSIE

(Careful) You wouldn't, would you?

ESPERANZA

No, would you?

SUSIE

No.

ESPERANZA

Then why...

SUSIE

Just acting out I guess.

ESPERANZA

What about Moscow?

SUSIE

Don't worry about them. They have lots of little red buttons but nothing on the other end of the wire.

(Silence.)

ESPERANZA

So, now what do we do?

SUSIE

I have an idea. You send warships and make a lot of threats. I say nothing. In a few days you take more pictures. This time of the missiles being dismantled. I'll say Moscow backed off. I look good to the world, you win nuclear game of chutes and ladders and we both live to see another Spring Training.

ESPERANZA

Fidel, that's a great idea. *(Pause)* But what will the Russkies say?

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