

## ...Do Not Collect \$200

by J. Wiltz

**Setting: An Ordinary Room, Nowhere in Particular.**

(Lights fade to the tune of Michael Lujan's "An Ashkenazi Theme"© – this music is mandatory for this production\*. When the lights come back up we see a very simple set: a card table surrounded by three chairs. Standing in front of this table are **HITLER**, **LENIN**, and **NAPOLEON**. **HITLER** and **NAPOLEON** are both visibly agitated, though **LENIN** appears somewhat aloof. They have been kept waiting by the fourth member of their party.)

**Napoleon**

This is ridiculous.

**Hitler**

(checks his watch) It's 6:14. We've been waiting for over an hour now.

**Napoleon**

You see, this is what happens when you have an Irishman in your party. You get just one person with an inferiority complex and pretty soon, before you know it, they're trying to take everybody else down with them.

**Lenin**

Oh really, Bonaparte, I don't think it's quite so dramatic as that. He certainly doesn't have an inferiority complex. He's an artist. He's probably just making detailed mental notes to use in his next novel.

**Hitler**

Oh, here we go with this *scheist* again. "Welcome to the Far Left, where we enjoy making excuses for the people who hold the rest of us back."

**Napoleon**

(chuckles) My sentiments exactly. And besides, Lenin, you're making two drastic oversights. One, he writes in stream-of-consciousness, which doesn't require any notes. And secondly, you're a Russian. What would you know about artists?

**Lenin**

Are you saying that Mother Russia has had no artists spring from her soil?

**Napoleon**

I would be amazed if you could name just *five*.

**Lenin**

(counting on his fingers) Dostoevsky. Leo Tolstoy. Yakhov Smirnoff. Rachmaninoff. And of course, Tchaikovsky.

**Hitler**

And let's not forget Ayn Rand.

**Lenin**

I was leaving that one out on purpose, but yes, Ayn Rand was also a comrade before she defected to the United States.

**Napoleon**

Yes, and speaking of the United States, how about that Cold War?

(**NAPOLEON** and **HITLER** both begin to laugh, mocking Lenin.)

**Lenin**

(undeterred) Actually, the Cold War was a lot of fun. But I'm sure it wasn't half as much fun as your Russian Campaign back in 1812. Tell me, is it *fun* to trek across miles and miles of snow only to find a burned city? I've always been curious about that.

(**LENIN** and **HITLER** now laugh, mocking Napoleon.)

**Napoleon**

I don't know what *you*'re laughing about, Hitler. If I remember correctly, you didn't fare very well in Russia yourself.

**Hitler**

*Ja*, this is true...But we did *very* well in France! Let's see, did we take that in two *weeks* or two *days*? I try to remember, but, you know, it just happened so *fast*! (chuckles and then addresses Lenin.) Lenin, have you ever been to Paris?

**Lenin**

Once, in 1895.

**Hitler**

Did you see the "Arc of Triumph?"

**Lenin**

*Da!* I did see that. And I remember, I thought to myself, "*What* triumph?"

(**HITLER** and **LENIN** laugh once again, mocking Napoleon.)

**Napoleon**

Go ahead, laugh it up. I don't care, because one of these days when you least expect it, you two are going to get it.

**Lenin**

Which reminds me, *you* got something in the mail today.

**Napoleon**

I did? What was it?

**Lenin**

It was a package from Waterloo...they sent your ass back to you!

(**LENIN** and **HITLER** laugh hysterically now, even high-fiving one another.)

**Napoleon**

(growing emotional) You know something, Lenin? I really don't think I want to be around you anymore. I used to think that you were a really decent guy, but now I see...

(**NAPOLEON** is interrupted by **HITLER** who has spotted **JOYCE** on his way in.)

**Hitler**

Wait! Hold that thought. He's here.

(**JOYCE** enters, carrying a 6-pack of Guinness Stout and a Monopoly board. He appears lost in thought, oblivious to all that is said to him.)

**Hitler**

(irritated and sarcastic) Well, how nice of you to join us, Mr. Joyce.

**Napoleon**

(sarcastically) Yes, Joyce, truly it is an honor to have you grace us with your presence on this festive occasion. Oh, and I see you've brought beer with you too. Am I to take it that you've been at an Irish fraternity party this whole time?

(**JOYCE** remains silent and aloof as he sets down his beer and begins to set up the Monopoly board on the card table.)

**Hitler**

Now is not the time for a silent spell, Joyce! We've been waiting for over an hour. Where have you been?! I demand an explanation.

**Joyce**

(stands silently for a moment and then begins slowly) Along Sandymount Strand I walked...the breeze blowing upon my wind-chapped cheek. Sand upon my boots. A ringing in my ears, like the sound of the bells at Clongowes....*Piiing Pooong*.

**Lenin**

(to Napoleon) Ah ha! What did I tell you? He's been making notes so he can use them in a novel.

**Napoleon**

Yeah, a novel filled with details about everything someone does in the course of a day. That'll go over *really* well, won't it, Joyce?

(**JOYCE** says nothing, apparently sinking into another silent spell.)

**Napoleon**

Jimmy, I am not in the mood for this today, okay? I'm really not. Now, when I speak to you, I expect you to respond to what I'm saying. *Est-ce que tu comprends?*

**Lenin**

Oh, leave him alone, Napoleon! What difference does it make where he's been or what he's doing? The point is that he's here now and we may proceed as a group. Now come on, everyone, pick your pieces. We're late enough as it is.

(The characters all begin searching through the open Monopoly box to find their desired pieces. **NAPOLEON** picks up the car, which is quickly snatched away by **HITLER**.)

**Hitler**

I'm going to be the little car!

**Napoleon**

Oh no fair! You got to be the little car last time!

**Hitler**

*Ja*, well, if you'd established an automobile industry in *your* country, I would be more than willing to let you be the little car. But all you ever did was get beaten like a dog, so you have to be the little terrier!

**Napoleon**

Screw that. I'll be the little thimble. How about you, Lenin? What are you picking?

**Lenin**

In honor of my life behind the Iron Curtain, I am going to be the little iron. What about you, Joyce? You've got some choices here. You can be the little hat, the little dog, or the little horse.

**Joyce**

Little hats, little dogs, little horses...I shall try to fly by those nets.

**Hitler**

Not again with the nets, Joyce. It's been a long day.

**Joyce**

(rambling into stream-of-consciousness) Long day...Nora, resting her feet at Howth Head. The sun. Writing down her every word on my cuff. She laughed like music. Scent of peaches from her hand lotion.

**Napoleon**

(growing agitated) I'm tuning him out. I'm tuning him out. I'm tuning him out. Now then, we've got the pieces picked. Who's going to be the banker?

**Hitler**

Oh, I hate being the banker. Why don't you do it, Emperor Bonaparte?

**Napoleon**

Gee, I thought you'd never ask. Now, as you all know, each player starts off with \$1500. Two five hundreds. Two one hundreds. Two fifties. Six twenties. Five tens. Five fives. And five ones. So if any of you end up with any more or less than that, just let me know.

(**NAPOLEON** begins to distribute money to all of the players. As he does this, **LENIN** takes a calculator from his pocket and begins to do an equation. Seeing the answer to this equation, he begins to distribute various portions of the money Napoleon is giving him to the other players. The others seem confused.)

**Napoleon**

(realizing something is up) What the hell are you doing?

**Lenin**

"The history of all hitherto existing society is the history of class struggle." In order to ensure peace, we must first ensure equality and equal distribution of wealth.

**Napoleon**

Oh, I don't believe this. Lenin, you can't be a Communist and play Monopoly. The whole point of the game is to make everyone else go without.

**Lenin**

(shocked) WHAT?! The capitalist concept of systematic poverty, the exploitation of people - this is fun? This is worthy of being a board game?

**Napoleon**

Well, duh! Maybe you didn't see this. (He lifts up the Monopoly box and shows it to Lenin.) Here, what does this say? "MADE IN AMERICA." I mean, the name of the game is *Monopoly*. That never registered to you?

**Lenin**

I thought we were all just trying to go around the board and stay out of jail.

**Hitler**

You really *are* a Russian.

**Joyce**

Maybe we should put a breadline on Boardwalk to make him feel more at home.

(**HITLER** and **NAPOLEON** both begin to laugh somewhat wildly. They were not expecting this from Joyce.)

**Hitler**

Good one, Jimmy! I knew you'd loosen up eventually.

**Napoleon**

Yeah, really. I can talk to you now that you've stopped talking in those weird little sentence fragments.

**Joyce**

(slipping back into stream-of-consciousness) Sentence fragments... Incompletion, like the beginning of *Jerry Maguire*. Or like coitus – coming without cumming. Old Miller spilled the milk and ruined the romance. Pity, that.

**Hitler**

Oh, come on! You were doing so good for a second there, Jimmy!

**Joyce**

For a second. For a minute. For an eternity. Granules of sand. Hourglass.

**Napoleon**

See, this is why William Faulkner got the Nobel Prize and you didn't.

(**LENIN** and **HITLER** both recognize the severity of this insult and begin to make talk-show noises like "Oooooo!" in an effort to spur the confrontation on. **JOYCE** is rattled, and after a moment of thought begins to speak in a very straightforward manner.)

**Joyce**

Okay, Napoleon, that was low. Even for you.

**Napoleon**

Low? What's low about it? It's true, is it not?

**Joyce**

Well, yes, but how would you appreciate it if I said something like, "You're shorter than I am. That's why I can please your wife and you can't?"

(**LENIN** and **HITLER** continue to egg the confrontation on as **NAPOLEON** begins to grow enraged and positions himself to strike Joyce.)

**Napoleon**

Joyce, you can mock my country. You can mock my military defeats. You can even mock that goofy little hat I'm usually wearing. But you just crossed a line when you talked about my Josephine...

(Sound effect: A cellular phone ringing. **NAPOLEON** reaches into his inner coat pocket and takes the phone from within. He stares at the caller ID and realizes that it is Josephine calling.)

**Napoleon**

And speak of the devil. (answers phone and suddenly turns sheepish) Hello?... Oh hi, honey, what are you doing?... Oh, I'm just out and about, doing great humanitarian deeds... What?... Marie-Louise said she saw me out with my friends? Well, that must have been someone that looked like me. I haven't seen the guys all day.

**Joyce**

(yelling so that Josephine might hear him) Yes he has! He's right here playing Monopoly with us right now!

(**NAPOLEON** motions to Joyce, telling him to be quiet.)

**Napoleon**

(still talking to Josephine) What, honey?... Oh, that was nothing. You see, I'm here at the hospital visiting Tourette's patients, and one of them just had a fit.

**Joyce**

(yelling once again) No he's not! This is Joyce, and I'm here with Lenin, Hitler, and a whole bunch of strippers! The party's going on, Josephine! You should see Napoleon. He's dancing with the lampshade on his head! Woo hoo!

**Napoleon**

(still on the phone) What?... What?... Honey, I can't hear you. My signal's breaking up. Let me call you back.... What?... Yes, I'll call you back.... Okay... Okay... I love you too... Au revoir.

(**NAPOLEON** hangs up and then takes a second to gain his composure before confronting Joyce.)

**Napoleon**

Joyce, that was not cool.

**Joyce**

(stream-of-consciousness once again) Cool. Cold. Colder. Coldest. Polar ice caps. Penguins trying to stay warm.

**Napoleon**

I give up.

**Hitler**

(agitated) Can we please get on with the game already? Eva's making red cabbage and sauerkraut tonight, and if I'm not home on time she'll lock me out.

**Napoleon**

Fine. Go ahead and roll. Let's go.

(**HITLER** picks up the dice and rolls a three.)

**Hitler**

Drei! (he begins to move his game piece) *Eins...zwei...drei!* Baltic Avenue! I'll take it! I claim it in the name of Deutschland! We shall repeal the Versailles Treaty and take back what is rightfully ours!

**Napoleon**

Hitler, do we have to go over this every time we play this game? You don't *claim* the properties, you *buy* them.

**Hitler**

(confused) Buy? What is this *buy*? Why should I buy what is rightfully mine? Did those traitors *buy* the areas of the Fatherland which they usurped? Is it not my destiny to take them back?

**Lenin**

Okay, somebody just went off the deep end. (to Hitler) Hitler, I'm no genius when it comes to this game, but I do know that you have to pay for the properties before you can claim them.

**Hitler**

(flying into stereotypical Hitlerian rage) Curse the Weimar Republic and all who stand between the people of Deutschland and their rightful claim to Baltic Avenue! I will not *buy*! I will *conquer*! I will not *purchase*! I will wage *conquests*!

**Lenin**

Now, Hitler, this is very disappointing to me. Why, just the other day I was talking to my mother and telling her how you were going to those anger management courses and learning to be a nice person and everything. I remember, I said to her, "No really, Mom, he's a very nice guy. He just has some issues, I think." And now here you are, reverting to those old ways.

**Napoleon**

You know what your problem is, Adolf? You have an inferiority complex.

**Hitler**

You know, that's the second time today you've mentioned inferiority complexes. I think maybe there's something *you're* trying to hide from, Short Boy!

**Napoleon**

(angrily) Short Boy?! We'd be the same height if you weren't always marching around in those high-heeled boots of yours.

**Joyce**

Ain't that the damn truth! You two are both short. And I'm talking short! Short!

**Napoleon**

Joyce, this is an A-B conversation, so you can just C your way out of it.

**Joyce**

Did you think of that all by yourself, Little General?

**Napoleon**

Shut up! Nobody asked you. And besides, what are you doing here anyway? The three of us were all involved in militaries and revolutions. You are just a writer.

**Joyce**

And you're jealous.

**Napoleon**

What?

**Joyce**

You're jealous. Correct me if I'm wrong, but you're the only one in this room that's never written a book. Hitler did *Mein Kampf*. Lenin's writings have all been collected into countless anthologies. And me, well, like you said, I'm just a writer. Maybe that's what you have an inferiority complex about. You're jealous because you can't write.

(**NAPOLEON** sits silent and wounded for a moment, creating the impression that Joyce's accusation is true. He then picks up the dice and rolls them without saying a word. He rolls a two.)

**Lenin**

(looking at the dice) Ooh, snake eyes.

**Napoleon**

(moving his game piece) *Un...deux*. Community Chest. (picks up a Community Chest card but only briefly looks at it) I can't read this without my glasses. What does it say?

(**NAPOLEON** hands the card to **JOYCE**.)

**Joyce**

You can't see it, so you hand it to *me*? You're a smart one.

**Napoleon**

Oh, just shut up and read it.

**Joyce**

(reads the card) Uh oh. This isn't good.

**Hitler**

What does it say?

**Joyce**

(reading aloud dramatically, in a style and tone similar to his earlier stream-of-consciousness diction) "GO TO JAIL. Go directly to jail. Do not pass GO. Do Not Collect \$200."