

BREAK A LEG

S01 E01

"PILOT"

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Even for this pilot episode, we have a recap!

RECAP

VO VIOLETTE
Previously, on "Break a leg"...

Various characters that we will meet (and describe) later:

EXT. STREET - DAY

An empty battered box, on the side of the road.

A STRAY CAT approaches it, sniffes inside, goes into the box.

CUT TO:

INT. ETO (STAGE) - DAY

On the stage, Marie is taking a picture on her phone. She gestures to people in front of her. She wants them to all get in the frame.

She does hand signals to them : move to the left...

Move to the right...

She walks one step back...

CUT TO:

INT. TOWN HALL - DAY

Tamsin, in a wedding dress, in a big room, at Brussel's town hall. Next to her, in a especially elegant dress, Nicole. The two women are waiting un front of a closed big door. Both of them seem differently anxious.

NICOLE
(gives Tamsin her purse)
I'll see what's keeping them.

She enters through the big door.

Tamsin waits a few seconds... She rummages in Nicole's purse. And she finds...

Two condoms, in a square blue packaging. Same brand, but one seems pretty battered, the other is new.

TAMSIN
(mutters for herself)
Something old, something new,
something borrowed, something
blue.

She puts the two condoms in the pocket of her dress.

CUT TO:

INT. ETO (STAIRS) - DAY

Ghost Armand suddenly looking at us and, emphatic:

GHOST ARMAND
*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre,
théâtre...*

FADE TO BLACK.

COLD OPEN**INT. ILELLE CAFÉ - NIGHT**

A minuscule drag club. Full of customers, MEN and WOMEN. In their forties, fifties, some of them drunk. They are sweating, smiling, clapping:

On the counter of the bar, two DRAG QUEENS are dancing and lip-synching on a pop song, in unison.

INT. ILELLE CAFÉ BACKSTAGE - NIGHT

Backstage, the two drag queens have taken off their huge wigs, and they are rubbing off their makeup.

The eldest is GREGORY, 46 years old, a bit chubby.

The youngest is in fact... his sister! VIOLETTE, 42 years old.

VIOLETTE
(in subtitled Flemish)
I can't keep doing this.

GREGORY
Ashamed?

VIOLETTE
Your customers might object to--

GREGORY
They like you. So much that I thought, next week, you could--

VIOLETTE
I do have a day job.

INT. NARROW STREET - NIGHT

Gregory is now totally out of drags, with man's clothes. He has opened a back door: a narrow deserted street.

He looks at both sides, suspiciously:

Nobody.

He makes a gesture inside.

Violette gets out. She's now dressed as a normal woman.

She kisses Gregory on both cheeks. She walks away

GREGORY
Violette?...

She turns back.

GREGORY
*Saturday. Mom's birthday. Don't
forget it this time.*

VIOLETTE
Ya, ya...

She walks away.

INT. VIOLETTE'S SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violette enters her tiny apartment. After two steps, she stops. She sighs.

She's exhausted.

INT. VIOLETTE'S SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violette has just brewed a large pot of coffee. She serves herself five cups. She then spikes each of them with a lamp of whiskey.

She drinks the five cups of coffee, in one go.

She stays for a moment, looking in the vagueness... Dead tired.

INT. VIOLETTE'S SMALL APARTMENT - BATHROOM - DAWN

Violette's right hand opens the water for a bath. But... She opens the blue tap, for cold water.

Violette's hands set up three different alarm clocks.

Violette, naked, slides in the cold water.

Shivering.

LATER.

Violette is still shivering in the cold bath. But she has fallen asleep.
She snores lightly.

One after the other, the THREE ALARM CLOCKS begin to ring!

Violette opens an eye. She sighs...

INT. VIOLETTE'S SMALL APARTMENT - DAWN

Again, Violette has brewed a large pot of coffee.
She pours herself five cups.
That she spikes this time with lamps of gin.

Again, she drinks the five cups of coffee, in one go!...

EXT. STREET ETO BUILDING - MORNING

Violette steps out of her parked car (a two-seat Toyota car).

A small Brussels's street. At this time: empty and silent.

Violette walks to a building. She stops and looks at the building of the ETO:

A big entrance, now closed. Above it, a sign:

European Theater Organization

On the big wooden door of the big entrance, four-posters for upcoming shows.

Next to the big entrance: a smaller door.

Violette takes out a key chain from her purse. With one of the keys, she opens the smaller door.

She goes in.

INT. ETO (LOBBY) - MORNING

Violette is in the lobby of the ETO:

A big room, with a counter, a big double door at the rear (the entrance to the theater) and a staircase (to the offices).

Nobody.

Silence.

Violette closes her eyes. Exhausted.

She opens her eyes. She walks through the lobby.

She arrives at the stairs.

INT. ETO (STAIRS TO THE FIRST FLOOR) - MORNING

Violette climbs the stairs. Slow, tired.

After a CUT, suddenly appears ARMAND'S GHOST: a handsome very pale middle-age actor.

He walks behind Violette. With big theatrical gestures, he whispers, in French:

GHOST ARMAND
*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre,
théâtre...*

Violette doesn't even acknowledge the ghost's presence, behind her.

She arrives at the first floor. She enters her office, just in front of the staircase.

GHOST ARMAND
*...Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre,
 théâtre...*

Violette closes the door just in front of the ghost.

INT. ETO (VIOLETTE'S OFFICE) - MORNING

Violette sits on her office chair.

She lets her upper body fall flat on her desk!...

But the Ghost Armand has appeared in front of her:

GHOST ARMAND
 (whisper)
*...Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre,
 théâtre...*

VIOLETTE
 Let me sleep!

CUT to another angle:

The ghost has disappeared.

Violette closes her eyes. Instantly, she sleeps. She begins even to snore lightly...

Suddenly!

Enters in the office:

A big man (a GREEK DIRECTOR), dressed like the cliché of a theater actor: hat, big coat, very long scarf.

Outraged!

Violette looks at him, surprised.

GREEK DIRECTOR
 You are Mrs. Violette Van
 Espeel?! The artistic director of
 this... This... This "place"?
 This "ETO"?! This "European
 Theater Organization"?

VIOLETTE
 (whispers for herself, in
 French:)
Bordel de merde héliporté...
 (big professional smile:)
 Yes, it's me. How can I help you?

ACTE 1

INT. MARIE AND JOANNA'S APARTMENT - DAWN

SOUND OF MACHINE GUNS, from another room !

MARIE (37 years old) is seated on her bed. A good-looking woman, very serious, very French.

With a lot of difficulties, she manages to stand up: she has...

...A broken leg!...

It's cast until her left knee.

She's in her spacious and cozy **BEDROOM** – soft pastel colors.

SOUND OF MACHINE GUNS!

VOICE JOANNA
STOP IT! THE TWO OF YOU!

The sound of machine guns stops!

VOICE JOANNA
MARIE!... MARIE!... BREAKFAST IS
READY!

MARIE
ARRIVING!

Marie takes her crutches. She walks to the door of the bedroom.

On her crutches, she enters the **KITCHEN**.

Her wife JOANNA, a beautiful 34-year-old black English woman, has just served breakfast for their two children, LUCIE (4 years old) and MARCUS (6 years old).

The two kids are in disguise, Lucie a princess, Markus as a fairy tale prince. But both of them have, on the table, on front of them... A toy machine gun!

They are eating cereals in attentive silence.

Marie looks at Joanna:

The young woman is angry. She puts an iPad in front of Marie:

On it, a news article:

*ETO: the European Theater Organization
strikes back!
More shows! More productions!*

With a smiling photograph of Violette.

Marie reads through the article.

JOANNA
She's taking advantage of you.

MARIE
No, she's not. She--

(Marie talks an almost perfect English, with just a slight French accent.)

JOANNA

Stop defending her! You should tell her that you were supposed to be the Artistic Director of that stupid European Theater, not her!

MARIE

If I do that, she'll know I'm her "enemy".

(She has said the word "enemy" in a theatrical and satirical tone. She carries on:)

"*Sur le théâtre du monde, je m'avance masqué.*"

Joanna wants to tell something...

SOUND OF MACHINE GUNS!

The two children are shooting at each other, with furious and devious faces!

JOANNA

STOP IT! CUT IT OUT!

Marie's face, thinking, with a slight smile. SOUND OF MACHINE GUNS!

INT. ETO (DIFFERENT LOCATIONS) - DAY

FIVE AVERAGE PEOPLE, three women, two men, from 28 to 42 years old, wearing coats. They are waiting in the **LOBBY** of the building.

They are bored. Some of them are looking at their phones.

Suddenly enters IZABELLA. A big woman, with huge glasses and a huge smile.

IZABELLA

Hello-hello-hello-hello everybody!

Not such a bad English pronunciation but a strong, strong Polish accent:

IZABELLA

My name is Izabella Bogda, and I am in charge of public relations here at ETO, the European Theater Organization. So follow me in our gorgeous institution!...

She gestures to the Five People to follow her. She walks to the **STAIRS**.

The Five People look at each other. They follow her. So does the camera.

Izabella climbs the stairs.

IZABELLA

Until 1983, this building was a French-speaking theater company called "le Théâtre de Bruxelles". Some say that the building is haunted, by the *three* actors who died on stage in its most glorious days, in the seventies and the eighties!...

(Short laugh.)

She crosses YEGOR et CLAUDIA, the two technicians of ETO.

We let Izabella get out of the frame with her group, and we stay with Yegor (26, Russian-born, now Swedish) and Claudia (37, a small athletic and boyish Portuguese woman).

Both of them are carrying thick electric cables around the shoulder. They were going in opposite directions and stopped on the stairs to discuss:

They have a heated conversation: from now on, should they only buy LED lamps or still other types of lights?...

But Yegor talks in Russian and Claudia in Portuguese (no subtitles). They seem to understand each other perfectly.

Suddenly, Yegor notices:

With crutches and difficulties, Marie is climbing the stairs

Yegor gives Claudia his coil of electric cables. He walks to Marie.

(Claudia heads out to the technical room.)

Yegor takes Marie by the arm:

YEGOR

(strong Russian accent)
Help you need from me.

MARIE

No, I don't.

YEGOR

So I help you.

MARIE

Niet!

That makes Yegor smile. He carries on helping her - which makes her climbing the stairs more difficult.

YEGOR
Tonight, booking we have made for
170 people yes?

MARIE
I don't kn-- we have only 157
sits!

YEGOR
Indeed yes yes.

MARIE
How are you going to--?

YEGOR
No problem! Only solutions!

He laughs.
And makes Marie almost fall!
He catches her at the last moment and laughs again.

They have reached the **FIRST FLOOR**. They take the corridor to the right, to Marie's office. Yegor carries on helping Marie. She is more and more annoyed.

They cross a female ghost, a beautiful woman in her late thirties, the GHOST ANNABELLE.

The ghost walks in the opposite direction. We follow her, as she does a very dramatic monologue:

GHOST ANNABELLE
*...Certes je ne sais pas quelle
chaleur vous monte:
Mais à convoiter, moi, je ne suis
point si prompte,
Et je vous verrois nu du haut
jusques en bas,
Que toute votre peau ne...*

The ghost Annabelle passes in front of the **COFFEE CORNER**. We stop on it:

Three people are drinking coffee:
NICOLE, 52, very stern, very serious. She's an Italian transgender, with elegant but conservative clothes.
TAMSIN, 36, British, a tad overweight, with something of an overgrown little girl.

Aside, stands JEROEN. 28, Dutch, tall, beautiful. He's thinking, while sipping his tea. Very dark thoughts.

TAMSIN
--Quite a night.

NICOLE
Not interested.

(Tamsin talks loud enough for Jeroen to hear her:)

TAMSIN
I am not the kind who has sex and
tells. But yesterday--

NICOLE
Really not interested.

(Jeroen doesn't listen to Tamsin. He's still brooding...)

TAMSIN
Two guys. *Young* guys.

NICOLE
I don't care.

TAMSIN
One plumber. One fireman.

NICOLE
Not listening.

TAMSIN
One on the top. And the other on
the--

Jeroen finishes his cup and goes to the sink to wash it.
He wants to go, but Tamsin put herself in his way:

TAMSIN
Have a good day, *husband*.

JEROEN
What? Oh, yes.

Tamsin has a short forced laugh.

Nicole observes Tamsin and Jeroen.

Jeroen smiles at Tamsin awkwardly. He walks away.

Tamsin is crushed...

Izabella and her five People group pass in front of the
coffee corner. We follow her:

Izabella talks very very fast:

IZABELLA
...
(A SUIVRE)

IZABELLA (SUITE)

Because ETO is financed at 17 percent by the French-Spoken Community of Belgium, *la Fédération Wallonie-Bruxelles*, 24 percent by the Flemish Community of Belgium, *de Vlaamse Regering*, fifteen percent by sponsoring and tax-shelter, and the rest by the CEE.

She goes through a door, goes through the **BACKSTAGE CORRIDOR** and arrives at the back of the **SCENE OF THE THEATER**.

IZABELLA

This is our small but cozy theater. Sometimes, for big events, we rent bigger theaters...

VOICE GHOST ARMAND

...*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre...*

IZABELLA

... And sometimes, we even use concert halls...

The Ghost Armand appears on the stage. But neither Izabella nor the visitors acknowledge him.

GHOST ARMAND

...*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre, théâtre...*

IZABELLA

... In fact, our theater is really suited for amateur companies...

We follow the Ghost Armand: he crosses the stage. He goes out.

GHOST ARMAND

...*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre, théâtre...*

Armand climbs the stairs with ample theatrical gestures of his arms.

GHOST ARMAND

...*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre, théâtre...*

We follow him, until the second floor.

He walks past the Greek Director, who's waiting, and who sees the ghost. We stay on him, as he looks with bewilderment at this ghost who passes in front of him.

GHOST ARMAND

...*Théâtre, théâtre, théâtre, théâtre...*

Suddenly, Violette arrives from the other side, with a document in her hand. She approaches the Greek Director:

VIOLETTE

I found your application. It took a while, but... Here it is. But--

GREEK DIRECTOR

My company is an official European expat company! I have the right to stage a play here!

VIOLETTE

Yes, you do, but you didn't fill the document properly. That's why it--

GREEK DIRECTOR

I filled it as correctly as I could!

VIOLETTE

You declare having seven actors, but you only filled the information for four of them--

GREEK DIRECTOR

Yes but the *other* three...

(He sighs.)

That's why we are doing a classical Greek tragedy *with masks*. So that *those three* can stay anonymous.

VIOLETTE

Why do they have to stay anonymous?

GREEK DIRECTOR

(outraged)

I can't answer *that*! I could be thrown in prison if I told you *that*!...

VIOLETTE

Oh... *That* level of secrecy?

The Greek Director nods gravely.

GREEK DIRECTOR

They can't show their faces publicly. Their names can't appear in official documents. But they are working for European entities! They have the absolute right to be part of an amateur theater company!...

Beat.

VIOLETTE

Let's talk about it to Marie, the administrative director of this theater.

She takes the **STAIRS DOWN** to Marie's office. The camera and the Greek Director follow her.

When we reach the **FIRST FLOOR**, we let them leave the frame...

And from the other side, appears Izabella, and the group, taking the **STAIRS DOWN**:

IZABELLA

... had been abandoned for almost ten years. It was bought by the European Union. After three years of careful rebuilding, with the usual delays due to the usual bankruptcies of subcontractors, it became the ETO, the European Theater Organization!

Izabella has arrived back in the **LOBBY** with her group:

IZABELLA

So now, if you have any questions, I--

TRANSLATOR

Sorry, sorry, the *métro* was stopped for half an hour at Beekant!

The TRANSLATOR, a young woman, has barged in the lobby. She turns to the five Visitors and... signs to them! (Belgian-French sign).

The Visitors sign back.

IZABELLA

They are... They are...

TRANSLATOR

They are waiting for a tour of the theater.

IZABELLA
They can't read lips?

TRANSLATOR
In French, some of them.

IZABELLA
Not in English?

She has a short constrained laugh.

IZABELLA
It reminds me of something that happened to me, in Poland, in the army. I was -- no, it was in Indonesia -- and I was not in the military, in Indonesia but -- maybe it was in Scotland -- no, in fact...

She stops, thinking, confused.

Everybody is looking at her...

Suddenly, she smiles at them:

IZABELLA
Follow me, please.

And she begins, again, the tour of the theater house. She takes the **STAIRS**, followed by the people and the Translator. The Translator translates what she says in Sign:

IZABELLA
My name is Izabella Bogda, and I am in charge of public relations here at ETO, the European Theater Organization...

We let them go out of the frame.

The empty **FIRST-FLOOR CORRIDOR**...

Suddenly, the face of a ghost, a small man in his sixties, the GHOST ANDRÉ! He looks in the lens!

GHOST ANDRÉ
NONNNN!

And he walks away with a dramatic walk, his cape in front of his face, as a second-rate Bela Lugosi.

ACT 2

INT. ETO - DAY

In the **CORRIDOR OF THE SECOND FLOOR**, Violette escorts the Greek Director.

VIOLETTE
... I'll see what I can do.
I'll--

Her phone rings. She looks at it. To the Greek Director:

VIOLETTE
Excuse me, I have to answer.

Violette goes back to **HER OFFICE**.

Violette walks two steps and answers her phone:

VIOLETTE
(bright smile)
Hello, hello Jeremy!... Saturday will be fine... But you could stay, have dinner, with the kids, and... OK, OK...
(suddenly furious, in Flemish:)
You British overdressed stupid cow! How can you say that to me?...
(suddenly calm)
Sorry. I misunderstood -- You're sure you can't eat dinner with--
(smooth:)
You could even stay aft--

She listens. She's on the verge of crying.

VIOLETTE
(stern)
OK. Saturday. OK.

She hangs out. She bites her upper lip not to cry.

INT. ETO (MARIE'S OFFICE) - DAY

Izabella (the Polish PR) is seated in front of Marie (the Administrative director).

MARIE
We have a problem. There is--

IZABELLA
Too many guests?
(Huge smile.)
I know, I know, but I had no choice. I *had* to invite people from the Swiss delegation.
(A SUIVRE)

IZABELLA (SUITE)
 But if I invite the Swiss
 delegation, I *have* to invite the
 Estonian delegation - because of
 the hat.

Fast exchange :

MARIE
 Which hat?

IZABELLA
 You know which hat.

MARIE
 No I don't.

IZABELLA
 (eludes)
 And if I invite the Estonian
 delegation, I have *no choice* than
 to invite the--

MARIE
 If the fire department comes and
 sees that--

Phone ring.

Marie pushes a button on her desk phone:

VOICE TAMSIN
 Marie? *That woman* wants to see
 you.

MARIE
 Which woman?

VOICE TAMSIN
 (sigh)
 The one with hair, and the nose,
 and the chin.

MARIE
 Tamsin! Who?!

VOICE TAMSIN
 (very fast)
 The administrative director in
 charge of theater for the Belgian
 French-speaking Community.

MARIE
 Nathalie?

VOICE TAMSIN

If "Nathalie" is the name of the administrative director in charge of theater for the Belgian French-speaking Community, well yes, it's Nathalie.

MARIE

Tell her to come to my office.

(To Izabella)

We'll talk later.

Izabella does a perfect and stern military salute.

Surprised reaction of Marie!

The door opens on NATHALIE, a smiling middle-aged woman.

Izabella wants to get out as Nathalie tries to get in.

A small awkward ballet.

Finally, Izabella lets Nathalie come in and then goes out of the office.

NATHALIE

(subtitled French)

Hello, Marie!

She goes around the desk to kiss Marie on her cheek. She sees the cast leg:

NATHALIE

What happened to you?

MARIE

I was taking a picture of a Spanish folkloric troupe. I walked one step back, to have everybody in the frame. And...

NATHALIE

You fell off the stage?

MARIE

I fell from the stage. And it wasn't even a good folkloric troupe. Even for amateurs.

She makes a face.

MARIE

Coffee?

NATHALIE

Sorry, I can't linger - we, at the Ministry, we were looking at the contracts.

(A SUIVRE)

NATHALIE (SUITE)
And we reassessed your obligations... Especially the in-house production.

Blank stare of Marie.

MARIE
 (suspicious)
You're trying to cut in the budgets?

NATHALIE
No, no - the ETO has to produce one show per year. It's in the contract you have signed with us.

Again, a blank stare.

MARIE
You're trimming the budgets.

NATHALIE
No, we're not - what will you produce, then?

MARIE
It's more of Violette's area... I'll have to talk to her. I'm not sure it is--

NATHALIE
You have till January. One production per year.

Big smile.

Marie tries to hide her fright behind a big smile of her own.

INT. ETO (COFFEE CORNER) - DAY

While sipping coffee, the two technicians, Yegor and Claudia are talking very seriously, Yegor in Russian, Claudia in Portuguese.

Izabella (the PR) looks at both of them, worried.

The two technicians suddenly stop talking. They look at the floor and dive in deep thoughts.

IZABELLA
 So?

YEGOR
This problem of too much people and not enough chairs, a solution, we find we will.

IZABELLA
What solution?

YEGOR
Not yet I know. But find a
solution, we will we will.

And he carries on thinking.

Jeroen, brooding a usual, passes in the corridor, with documents under his arm.

Izabella looks at him.

She smiles: *she* has an idea!

INT. ETO (MARIE'S OFFICE) - DAY

Marie is now alone in her office. She pushes a button on the desk phone:

MARIE
Tamsin, I need our contract with
the French-speaking Community.

VOICE TAMSIN
(annoyed)
Really? You really need *that*?...

MARIE
And also our contract with the
Flemish-speaking Community.

VOICE TAMSIN
Really...
(Sigh.)
When do you need *all that*?...

MARIE
Now! I'm coming to your office!

INT. ETO (FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR) - DAY

Marie walks in the CORRIDOR, on her crutches.

Jeroen rushes and grabs her hand:

JEROEN
Let me help you.

MARIE
(flat)
No.

But Jeroen doesn't seem to listen. He helps her, which makes it more difficult for her to walk...
Once again, she falls... He catches her at the last moment.

INT. ETO (TAMSIN'S OFFICE) - DAY

Marie enters Tamsin's small, disheveled and messy office.

Tamsin is lying back in her chair, her feet on her desk, reading a glossy fashion magazine.

Marie looks at her, angrily.

TAMSIN

(without averting her gaze
from the magazine)

The contract with the French-speaking Community is on my desk. Left side. Red binder.

MARIE

And the contract with the Flemish-speak--?

TAMSIN

Under the French-speaking one. Red binder. I also put our contract with the German-speaking Community, if you need it. Black binder.

MARIE

We have a contract with the *German-speaking* Community of Belgium?

TAMSIN

Why make things simple when you can make them *really* complicated? Welcome to Belgium...

INT. ETO (FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR) - DAY

Marie gets out of Tamsin's office.

Jeroen is standing there, very serious.

MARIE

What are you doing here?

JEROEN

I was waiting for you.

MARIE

Don't help me.

JEROEN

But you need--

MARIE

It's easier for me to walk without any help!

LATER:

Again, Jeroen is helping Marie.
Again, it's making her walk more difficult.
Again, he makes her fall and has to catch her.

INT. ETO (MARIE'S OFFICE) - DAY

Seated behind her desk, Marie is reading the contracts.
She has a wicked smile.

EXT. STREET ETO - DAY

In the street of the theater: leaning on her crutches, Marie gets into a cab.

EXT. BIG AVENUE - DAY

A marble sign, on a building, in (subtitled) Flemish:

FLEMISH COMMUNITY

INT. FLEMISH COMMUNITY BUILDING (OFFICE) - DAY

Marie enters a small and very nice office.

MARIE
Mrs. Derijke?

Behind her desk, Mrs. DERIJKE, a young woman with huge glass stops.

MARIE
I am Marie, from ETO.

MRS. DERIJKE
Yes, Marie, Marie! How is your leg?

MARIE
Still cast -- I have a question.
About the contract, that ETO has signed with your ministry--

MRS. DERIJKE
Oh, you're the second person to ask me about it, this week! My French-speaking counterpart--

MARIE
Nathalie?

MRS. DERIJKE
Yes, that's it, Nathalie. She also had a few questions about it.

MARIE
 (sardonic)
 Did she now?...

Mrs. Derijke leans towards her, with an hush voice:

MRS. DERIJKE
 The word is, they are trying to
 cut budgets, over there.

MARIE
 Are they now?

INT. RESTAURANT - DAY

A crowded hipster restaurant.

Marie, on her crutches, approaches the table where her wife,
 Joanna, is sitting.

Joanna stands up to help her...

MARIE
 (harsh)
 Don't.

JOANNA
 But--

MARIE
 No.

JOANNA
 (vexed but hiding it)
 As you wish.

Joanna sits down.

Marie sits in front of her. Wicked smile:

MARIE
 I think I have found a way to
 trap Violette. A way to get rid
 of my boss and *become* the boss.

She giggles.

INT. ETO (CONFERENCE ROOM) - DAY

Marie, Violette (the Belgian boss of ETO), Tamsin (the
 English secretary), and Nicole (the Italian transgender
 accountant) are seated around the big table of the meeting
 room.
 Coffee cups, biscuits.

MARIE
 ...
 (A SUIVRE)

MARIE (SUITE)

In the contract that we have with the French-speaking Community, it is stipulated that we *have to produce one show every year*. We *have to put money in this production*.

VIOLETTE

It's September. We have plenty of time to put *something* in production. What kind of show it has to be?

MARIE

They don't specify -- that's *not* our main problem: in the contract that we have with the *Flemish*-speaking Community, it is stipulated that we *can't* put money in a show. Strictly forbidden.

Violette shakes her head, a bit worried.

VIOLETTE

Who worked on those contracts, with the two communities?

MARIE

Three. We also have a contract with the German-speaking ones, but that's a very short contract, nothing binding... *I worked on all three contracts*.

(gentle:)

But you signed them. It's *your* responsibility.

Briefly: Violette looks at Marie with a blank stare.

VIOLETTE

So we *have to produce a show* and we *can't produce a show*, at the same time?

MARIE

(big smile)

Exactly.

Nicole nods seriously.

NICOLE

It's a bit of a Schrodinger's cat.

TAMSIN
(suddenly panics)
Who's that Schrodinger? Where is
the cat?

NICOLE
(dead serious)
The cat is in a box.

TAMSIN
What box? I'm allergic to cats!

NICOLE
It's a metaphor...

TAMSIN
I'm allergic to metaphors!

NICOLE
...An oversimplified and, I
suppose, a false metaphor - for
quantum physics. Quantum physics
could be seen as a box where a
cat is at the same alive and
dead.

TAMSIN
Even a cat can't be at the same
time dead and alive.

NICOLE
In quantum physics, yes. While
the box is closed, the cat is in
those two states at the same
time.

TAMSIN
Strange cat.

NICOLE
(dead serious)
Cats *are* strange.

INT. ETO (CORRIDOR FIRST FLOOR) - DAY

Nicole (the Italian accountant) and Violette (ETO's boss)
walk together.
Violette is thinking deeply.
Nicole looks at her.

NICOLE
(low voice)
The contracts. Marie did it on
purpose.

VIOLETTE
No, she didn't.

NICOLE
You should fire her.

VIOLETTE
(laughing)
I don't have the authority to fire her. And she's very good at her job.

NICOLE
So good that she screws up the contracts...

VIOLETTE
They are very complicated contracts.

NICOLE
You know that she wants to be *vizir à la place du vizir*?

Violette doesn't seem at all worried by *that*:

VIOLETTE
(little smile)
Does she?

NICOLE
She thinks that she would be a better artistic director than you!

VIOLETTE
She would be. She's bright, she has all those degrees, she--

NICOLE
She doesn't know theater! She doesn't *understand* theater!

The Ghost André appears and points at Nicole:

GHOST ANDRÉ
(terrible French accent)
She doesn't understand theater.
She doesn't see us...

NICOLE
(angry)
Yes, I see you!

GHOST ANDRÉ
Oh. Sorry.

NICOLE
I love theater! I've given all my life, to theater! Theater is important! It's the most, the most, the most...

And she gets so angry that she carries on giving a passionate speech on the beauties of theater, but in Italian...

Even if we don't speak Italian, we understand a few words :
"Fascisto", "Mussolini", "Tortellini" - Violette reacts:
Tortellini?...

In the middle of a sentence, Nicole notices that the Ghost André has disappeared. She turns back to Violette:

NICOLE

We may lose at least 17 percent
of our budget, with this problem!
The board would fire you for
that!

VIOLETTE

(smiling)

We'll find a solution. We always
d--

Suddenly, Violette stops. Nicole stops a step after her.

Violette is looking at the floor.

VIOLETTE

Your cat story... Shlobinber's
cat.

NICOLE

Schrodinger's cat?

Violette looks back at Nicole with a smile:

VIOLETTE

We don't open the box. We keep it
closed.

NICOLE

How could we do that?

VIOLETTE

I have only one word: Greek
tragedy.

NICOLE

That's two words.

Violette thinks about it. She nods, dead serious:

VIOLETTE

In Greek, it's only one word:
tragedy. It's like Chinese Food.
In China, it's just called
"food".

The two woma nod, dead serious.

ACT 3

INT. ETO (LOBBY) - NIGHT

It's a Premiere night:

FULL OF ELEGANT PEOPLE, most of them intellectuals, middle-class, middle-aged and old.

A few younger people, but not many of them.

Discussions, in French, English, Flemish and every European language.

Like everybody, Nicole (the Italian accountant) is elegantly dressed. She is looking for somebody. Worried.

She takes out her phone.

**INT. / EXT. VIOLETTE'S CAR / ADMINISTRATIVE BUILDINGS
STREET - NIGHT**

Violette (ETO's boss) has fallen asleep in her car. A light snore.

She's also dressed more elegantly than usual.

Her car is parked in a street of office buildings.

Violette's phone rings.

Violette wakes up suddenly. She answers.

VIOLETTE

Allô?... Yes, I know that there
is a Premiere, but first I have
to-- he's here, I have to go!

She hangs up the phone. She gets out of the car.

From inside the car, we see her running to the opposite pavement :

A FEW EMPLOYEES are getting out of a building. Among them, the Greek Director (here in a work suit and a coat).

Violette talks to him. He seems surprised.

We approach them:

The Greek Director suddenly smiles:

GREEK DIRECTOR

...You're accepting *our* little
Greek tragedy in *your* theater?

VIOLETTE

Better than that: we are
producing it.

The Greek Director looks at her, seemingly terrified.

Suddenly, he is in tears. He falls in her arms.

She has to pat his back and comfort him.

GREEK DIRECTOR
Thank you so much!...

VIOLETTE
Hum... My pleasure?

Suddenly, he recites a very sad monologue of Aeschylus's "Agamemnon", in ancient Greek...

Then falls back on Violette's shoulder.

She pats him again on the back.

INT. ETO (LOBBY) - NIGHT

Back at the premiere:

We follow Izabella who walks through the crowd. She looks at the People...

She spots TWO OLD POLISH LADIES, very elegant, talking to each other in Polish.

IZABELLA
(subtitled Polish)
Hello Helena, hello Magda.

POLISH LADY 1
Oh, hello! How have you been?

IZABELLA
*Great, great... I was thinking...
Wouldn't you like to see the
performance in our special VIP
area?*

POLISH LADY 1
You have a VIP area?

From the other side of the lobby, Tamsin looks at Izabella talking to the two Polish ladies. She's angry.

The two Polish Ladies seem to agree. They follow Izabella, who leads them to the back of the lobby.

We follow the three women until they pass in front of Violette. We stay on her:

Violette is standing alone, in a corner. She's exhausted. She's fighting the urge to fall asleep.

Mrs. Derijke, from the Flemish Community, approaches her:

MRS. DERIJKE
(Flemish with subtitles)
*So, I've heard that you're
producing a show?*

VIOLETTE

Yes, we do -- but we don't put money in it. It's just facilities and technical material -- normally, I should send you the budget. But in this case...

She shakes her head very seriously.

MRS. DERIJKE

In this case what?

VIOLETTE

I'm sorry, but it's... Top secret.

Mrs. Derijke is surprised!

MRS. DERIJKE

Top secret? Really top secret?

VIOLETTE

(dead serious)

It is secret. It is top. It is top secret.

INT. ETO (TECHNICAL BOOTH) - NIGHT

Izabella brings the two old Polish Ladies in the technical booth...

Where there are already FIVE OTHER OLD LADIES: crammed in the corner of the already small place, seated on folding chairs. But they all have a cup of champagne and seem very happy being there.

(Claudia and Yegor are doing all the technical tasks necessary for the beginning of the show. They have to get around the seated ladies, but it doesn't seem to bother them.)

POLISH LADY 1

(outraged)

This is the VIP area? It's just -- oh, hello...

She has suddenly shifted gears and smiles (as does the second Polish Lady):

In the corner, stands a very dashing Jeroen. He's wearing a tuxedo. He has a bottle of champagne in his left hand and a big platter with snacks on his right. He's a bit gloomy, which hightens his beauty.

JEROEN

(endearing melancholia:)

Champagne?

The Polish Ladies sit on the folded chair.

POLISH LADY 1
 (bright smile)
 Certainly...

He pours them champagne.

JEROEN
 Do you want a snack? We only have
 Polish snacks...

POLISH LADY 1
 (flirtly:)
 We are Polish snacks ourselves...

Jeroen doesn't seem to understand the double entendre:

JEROEN
 (very fast)
 Paczki? Oscypek? Kielbasa?

The women don't answer. They keep on smiling to him.

INT. ETO (LOBBY) - NIGHT

Back in the lobby, in the crowd:

Violette (ETO's boss) is talking to Nathalie (the employee of the French-speaking Community).

NATHALIE
 (subtitled French)
*...You'll send us the budgets? So
 we can close the file?*

VIOLETTE
 (shakes her head)
*I can't send them. There are...
 Security issues.*

NATHALIE
 ...

VIOLETTE
*Some of the peoples involved in
 this show are covered by... I
 can't say much more. We could be
 prosecuted, just talking about
 it...*

NATHALIE
You're joking?

VIOLETTE
I wish I was...

NATHALIE
But--

VIOLETTE
*Somebody could hear us. We might
be taped.*

NATHALIE
You think so?

Violette nods gravely.

Seen from the other side of the lobby:

Violette and Nathalie carry on discussing, gravely.

It's Marie who's looking at them. She's elegant, as is
Joanna, who stands at her side.

Nathalie nods a few times, then leaves Violette politely.

Violette turns to Marie. Bright smile.

She walks to Marie.

VIOLETTE
(low voice)
I've sealed the box. The cat is
now dead *and* alive.

MARIE
They bought it?

Violette nods with a smile.

MARIE
They are *really* afraid to be
prosecuted?

Violette shakes her head.

VIOLETTE
No, that's not what did the
trick... But for a brief moment,
their lives are a bit like a spy
novel. A hinge of James Bond in
their Courteline's life. Nobody
can resist to *that*.

She smiles.

Marie nods seriously.
Joanna tries hard to hide her anger.

VIOLETTE
I wanted to thank you.

MARIE
What for?

VIOLETTE
For everything.

She hugs Marie, for a long moment. Then she walks away.
Joanna and Marie look at her walking away.

JOANNA
(whispers with a fake smile)
She played you.

MARIE
(also fake smile)
And she didn't even do it on
purpose.

JOANNA
Stop defending her.

MARIE
I'm not. I will crush this
talented intelligent oblivious
bitch.

INT. ETO (THEATER) - NIGHT

The play is about to begin. People are seated, chatting a bit.

The stage is in darkness.

The light dims on the spectators.

TAMSIN'S RECORDED VOICE
Welcome in the European theater
Organization, for the Premiere,
in Brussels, of *Ritter, Dene,
Voss* from Thomas Bernhard, by the
Student-ensemble Theater of
Dubrovnik. We will kindly ask you
to switch off your phones and
remind you that taking pictures,
filming or reciting the text of
the play *before* the actors, is
strictly forbidden. Thank you and
have a good evening.

VIOLETTE'S RECORDED VOICE
(in French, without
subtitles)
*Bienvenue à l'ETO, pour la
première, à Bruxelles, de
"Déjeuner chez Wittgenstein" de
Thomas Bernhard, par le...*

FADE TO BLACK.

INT. TAMSIN'S APARTMENT - NIGHT

Tamsin lets herself fall in an old armchair. She seems utterly sad.

We see her tiny apartment:

Photographs of Jeroen all over the place.

More than a hundred photographs of him... Most of them have been taken on the fly, without him knowing it.

INT. MARIE AND JOANNA'S APARTMENT (BEDROOM) - NIGHT

Joanna is sound asleep.

But next to her, Marie is wide awake.

She looks at the ceiling. Furious.

INT. CAFE - NIGHT

Jeroen is in one of the few remaining all-night cafes of Brussels. A lot of noise, a lot of PEOPLE, some drunk.

But Jeroen is oblivious to all that. He's seated alone, at the remotest table, and he's writing with a pencil on a pad.

He writes, writes, writes. He's in the zone.

INT. ETO - NIGHT

Two in the morning. Silence. Nobody in the building. Even not the ghosts.

The empty lobby.

The corridors.

Tamsin's office.

The stage.

On the second floor corridor, on a wall:

Three glossy old black and white photographs, lit by faint overhead lights:

It's photographs of Arthur, Armand et Annabelle, the three ghosts. Very classy headshots.

Under each of them, a (subtitled) line in French, with for each of them their name, a date in the nineteen-seventies, and a sentence:

Mort sur la scène du Théâtre de Bruxelles (Dead on the stage of the Théâtre de Bruxelles).

INT. VIOLETTE'S SMALL APARTMENT - NIGHT

Violette is now wearing thick cotton pajamas. She drags herself to her bed. She lets herself fall in it.

She switches the nightstand lamp off.

BLACK.

We hear her go under the covers.
The soft sound of Violette's breath... She's so tired that it
took her only a second to fall asleep...

PHONE RING!

VIOLETTE'S VOICE
(calmly)
Putain de merde à roulettes.

She switches on the light. She takes her Phone.
She looks at it.
She sighs.
A long exhausted sigh...

TAG

INT. ILELLE CAFÉ - NIGHT

On the bar, Gregory and Violette are lip-synching and dancing
with enthusiasm.
The (small) place is PACKED WITH PEOPLE.

A middle-age CUSTOMER is sipping a drink. He's looking at
Violette, with frowned eyebrows.
He stops a WAITER (in light drag).

CUSTOMER
(points at Violette:)
She's a woman! A real, frigging,
biological, born, woman!

WAITER
(huge French accent)
So?

CUSTOMER
That's not drag!

WAITER
She's a level 2 drag queen. An
homage to the film "Victor.
Victoria". A woman pretending to
be a man pretending to be a
woman.

CUSTOMER
Oh...

WAITER
She's replacing Lady Tchin-Tchin,
who has the flu. Lady Tchin-Tchin
will be back next week. Enjoy the
show.

The Waiter walks away.

Gregory and Violette, lip-synching and dancing.

They are having the time of their lives.

FADE TO BLACK.

PREVIEW

VO TAMSIN

Next time, on "Break a leg".

We see excerpts of (false) sequences of the next episode:

INT. ETO (FIRST FLOOR CORRIDOR) - DAY

Now, it's Claudia who helps Marie walking in a corridor.

Marie grumbles angrily...

And again, she almost falls. Claudia has to catch her.

CUT TO:

INT. ETO (STAGE) - DAY

A rehearsal, on the stage:

SEVEN AMATEUR GREEK ACTORS are playing a scene of Aeschylus's Agamemnon.

They are wearing their own clothes, but on their faces, tragic masks that muffle their voices. They are impossible to understand, even for those fluent in Ancient Greek.

Suddenly:

GREEK DIRECTOR

(subtitled Greek)

NO! NO!

He's in the audience, standing, furious:

GREEK DIRECTOR

*You're playing the mask! And you
have to let the mask play through
you!*

The masked amateur actors look at each other, not sure what that means...

CUT TO:

INT. ETO (COFFEE CORNER) - DAY

Tamsin and Nicole are again in the coffee corner.

A moody Jeroen is drinking herbal tea, a few meters from them. He's deep in his thoughts and doesn't listen to:

TAMSIN

... A brother and a sister. They
don't do it to each other, but
they do it together.

NICOLE

I really don't want to know.

TAMSIN

And they did it to *me* over and
ov--

NICOLE

He's out of ear reach.

Indeed: Jeroen walks back to his office.

Tamsin sighs sadly.

CUT TO:

INT. ETO (MARIE'S OFFICE) - DAY

Marie is reading an official paper. She puts it down on her desk.

We approach her: devious smile...

END OF EPISODE