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The four suitors

by Antanas Skema

Characters:

Antanas Skema - Lithuanian author, director
Nastratin Hogeia - Turkish judge
Gregor Samsa - the suitor
Czech Orlando - the Italian knight
Don Quixote - the skilled hidalgo
Dracula - the dreaded Wallachian prince
Queen Boudicca - the woman the four suitors aspire to

The author's voice, Antanas Skema, can be heard in the background giving the stage directions, without being seen:

(A large throne-room, lit by torches on the walls. The hall has very high ceiling, supported by stone columns. In the middle of the room, four chairs placed in a semicircle, at a distance from each other, on which sit the four suitors of the beautiful Boudicca: Gregor Samsa, Orlando, Don Quixote, and Dracula. In front of them, two other seats on which are placed Judge Nastratin Hogeia and the beautiful Boudicca. All around, beside the walls, stand nobles, knights, maids and servants, onlookers.)



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Nastratin Hogeia (*sits on the seat in the lotus position; his head is wrapped in a large red turban and holds in his right hand the hose of a hookah lying at the foot of the seat*):

Honorable assistance, dear guests, I will now ask each of the four suitors to say a few words about them, to introduce themselves. It is good to know who we are dealing with, but especially our distinguished Mrs. Boudicca.

(The two, Hogeia and Boudicca, bow their heads to each other, as a sign of mutual respect).

Don Quixote (*shyly raises his hand to speak; his request is accepted, and the old knight stands up, arranges his mustache, proudly pushes his non-existent belly forward, and begins to speak*):

I don't think there's anyone in this room who doesn't know who I am. The most famous knight of all time, gone in the world ...

Orlando (*blinking his almond-shaped eyes like a woman's and smiling implicitly*):

... gone with his mind.

Nastratin Hogeia (*knocks on the chair with the metal end of the hookah hose*):

Please, quiet in the room or I'll have to kick you out. (*He turns to Don Quixote*).

Please continue.

Don Quixote (*runs his fingers over his mustache again and continues with emphasis*):



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... gone to the world to bring justice, to save the oppressed and to fight against injustice of any kind, but especially to win the heart of the beautiful Dulcinea

(Suddenly he remembers the beautiful Dulcinea and sits back on the chair, staring away, thinking of her).

Dracula *(looking sharply at the old man):*

Hellooooo, helooooo, Mr. Quixote, you're kind of out of your mind. What Dulcinea?

Antanas Skema *(appears from the shadows, where he had been hiding until then; he holds a few printed pages in his hand; he stops next to Boudicca and Hogeia, smiles at them a little confused and then addresses Dracula):*

If possible, avoid using "hello". The phone will be invented much later. Mr. Samsa may know something about this, but the rest ... So change, please! *(Then he retreats to his place, in the shadows).*

Dracula *(resumes):*

Mr. Quixote, you've kind of out of your mind. What Dulcinea? Here we are talking about the beautiful and fearless Boudicca *(he turns to her and smiles courteously at her).* *(Old Don Quixote was lost in his thoughts, without hearing anything in around).*

Orlando *(gets up from his chair so abruptly that everyone around him startles, including me, Antanas Skema, the one talking to now):*



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I think that the most suitable for the hand of the beautiful and fearless Boudicca can be none other than the most famous paladin of the Christian emperor Charlemagne.

I mean (*he slaps his chest and then smiles at the beautiful Boudicca as courteously as his rival, Dracula*).

Who could be braver, braver than me? Who could love this beautiful branch raised on British soil more than me, if not me? (*Orlando falls to his knees just as abruptly, holding out his hand to Boudicca, as she can barely control her laughter.*) Someone other than the one who went mad with love for a while because of Princess Angelica's betrayal.

(*Orlando sits back on the chair and looks away from Boudicca*)

Delicate Saracen flower seduced by the infamous knight Medoro ...

Gregor Samsa (*tapping his drum on his right temple, thoughtfully*):

Another carried by waves. Is anyone here with a sane mind?

Nastratin Hogea (*taps the chair again with the metal end of the hookah hose*):

Quiet in the room, please, or I'll kick you out.

Dracula (*rising again from his chair, hand up, like a schoolboy asking to answer the lesson; Hoge*a nods, and Dracula turns for a moment to Gregor Samsa):

I can't help but agree with Mr. Samsa here. It seems that out of the four alleged only two, Gregor and I have contact with reality.

Antanas Skema (*appears again from the shadows, with the few printed pages over which he looks briefly*):



Avoid using the words "contact" and "reality". Please! They're not going at all with this context. Let's be a little realistic. (*Then he retreats nervously to his place, in the shadows*).

Dracula:

Please, you understood what I meant. (*He turns to Gregor Samsa and raises his hands to the side*). So, it was just the two of us. Do you want to start?

Gregor Samsa (*He shyly gets up from his chair. He quickly arranges his hair, runs his palms over his blunt, faded suit, then begins to speak, without looking at those around him, his eyes fixed on the floor, his hands rubbing, nervously*):

I don't think you know my story, so with your will, I'll try to summarize it a little ...

Antanas Skema (*appears again from the shadows, even more nervously*):

Without "synthesizing". By God, why don't we get along? Maybe you, Mr. Samsa, know what that means, but I guarantee everyone else has no idea. (*He retreats to his place, in the shadows, snorting with nerves*).

Gregor Samsa (*Playing bewildered with the hem of his jacket, like a schoolboy caught cheating*):

I'm a serious, quiet man. I may not be as brave as the rest of you, but I know how to support a family. In fact, I even had a family that I took care of a few years ago: my mother, father and sister. Until my misfortune



happened. *(Everyone in the room becomes very careful, convinced that finally one of the suitors can be worthy of consideration)*

Gregor Samsa:

I knew for the first time that it was not good when I woke up that morning, lying on my back hard as a shell, with a swollen and brown belly and countless legs trembling helplessly in front of me.

Dracula *(He gets up from his chair, almost laughing out loud):*

Wow, wow. Wait a minute. "Countless legs"?

Antanas Skema *(appears again from the shadows, red on the nerves):*

"Wow, wow"? Mr. Dracula, where do you think you are? In a movie at Hollywood?

(Dracula looks at him puzzled at the word "Hollywood." Antanas makes a sign of discontent, then continues)

Antanas Skema:

By God, why don't we get along? This is the last time I draw your attention.

(He no longer retreats to his place, in the shadows; he stays next to the two seats in the center, watching the continuation of the scene).

Gregor Samsa *(increasingly agitated):*

Yes. That's what I wanted to tell you. I woke up that morning turned into a huge beetle. *(Dracula rises again, but remains in his chair, nailed by Antanas's cruel gaze).*



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Gregor Samsa:

For days, I continued to suffer, without any of them doing anything for me, the one who had taken care of them for so long.

The day I decided to die, I decided I didn't want to deal with them again. *(There is a noise in the hall. Dracula sat comfortably in his chair, convinced of victory).*

Gregor Samsa:

Yes. Yes. I didn't die. I just pretended to get rid of them. And here I am now, well, healthy, with a well-paid job, away from them. I did well, didn't I? And I think I'm a serious candidate. *(He sits back in his chair and wipes his sweaty palms on his pants).*

Nastratin Hogeia:

Mr. Dracula, it's your turn.

Dracula *(satisfied, full of him and smiling wide):*

Dear Lady Boudicca, Dear Judge Nastratin Hogeia, Mr Antanas Skema, Ladies and gentlemen, allow me to introduce myself. First of all, I'd rather be called Vlad. Vlad the Impaler. This is actually my real name. Unlike my rivals, I am a real character. And, in fact, I don't think I have to insist too much on the presentation. Who doesn't know me? Who in this world doesn't know me? The most famous character in Romania, the most feared. The one who stabbed so many people, who rose up against the Ottoman Empire, the one so famous for his honor, but also for his cruelty. I assure you that not everything that is said about me is entirely true. By no means am I a vampire as people say. It's true that I'm capable of facts that can terrify anyone, but the rest are just legends. *(Doubtful glances change among those present in the hall.*



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People whisper, and the beautiful Boudicca changes her face and looks at Dracula with fear and revulsion.

Antanas raises his hand and interrupts Vlad Țepeș's speech).

Antanas Skema:

It's pretty clear to me and, I guess, it's just as clear to Lady Boudicca (*He looks at her briefly and courteously, smiling at her*). In order not to stay here all day without solving the problem, I propose the following solution: because I am the author of this play and I decide absolutely everything that happens in its doings, the most correct would be for me to be the chosen one. (*Rumor in the room again*).

Antanas Skema (*takes his pen, puts the sheets on the table next to Nastratin Hoge's chair and starts writing, saying out loud, to be heard by everyone in the room*):

The four suitors lowered their heads, acknowledging defeat.

Judge Nastratin Hoge said aloud the name of Antanas Skema as the winner, and Lady Boudicca smiled tenderly at Antanas. Then she got up from the chair, took his arm, and walked slowly through the crowd out of the room. (*Antanas puts the pen and sheets down and looks at Boudicca. She smiles at him, gets up from the chair, takes Antanas by the arm and together they walk through the applauding crowd. The curtain is lowered*).

No need for decoration. This is exactly where play gadget is. Here and in the fact that the name of each character and everything that is written in parentheses must be said out loud by the one who plays the role of Antanas (*the stage directions can even be read from the sheet for more truthfulness*).

Even the last passage must be read aloud by Antanas, holding the sheets in one hand and holding Lady Boudicca by the arm !!!!!