

Take It or Believe It!

A pre-electoral TV show in contemporary Romania. Two guests are present: Mr Orchid, a nouveau-riche who is ostentatiously opulent and in bad taste, and Mr Poppy, his brother-in-law who is equally rich, but the intellectual type. They have been invited because they support opposing candidates for the gubernatorial election: Mr Orchid supports neo-nationalism, while Mr Poppy supports communism.

TV anchor

We are gathered here tonight to discuss the upcoming el...

Mr Poppy

You mean illusion! It is a hoax! They want to steal all the values of socialism we have so bravely built in this country for decades!

Mr Orchid

Don't you talk about cheating! You still haven't given me that money I lent you!

Mr Poppy

You mean the money I built a house for you with? Have you no shame?

TV anchor

Please let us refrain from digression. Mr Mr Orchid, you are a well-known personality on the public scene. Everyone knows you support neo-nationalism. Do you think you stand a chance this coming election?

Mr Orchid

We will win for sure! But before that I wanted to mention that yesterday, after the Gay Parade, I went on Victoriei Street and I sprayed holy water on the pavement in a whole procession. Those bastards, they soil the earth our great forefathers tread on! What's more, the place might be infested with their dirty spirit!

Mr Poppy

There he goes with his religious delirium again. Are you serious even? What does holy water have to do with the Gay Parade?

Mr Orchid

It cleanses the place from the impurity of those stranded people! They are sinners in the eyes of God! (quotes from the Holy Bible). But what could be expected from you, a commie who eats and drinks with the sinners and low lives. Look at you (gestures towards Mr Poppy's clothes which are indeed, a bit rumpled). Here, I have a bit of Holy Water left (starts spraying it throughout the studio).

Mr Poppy

(laughing heartily):

You are a joke you with your religious ramble and pious priests. Do you think that this is what our beloved Romanians need, a religious revolution? No! We need a red revolution! To give back the rights and lands to the workers, to cast away the capitalist vermin like you!

Mr Orchid

Look who's talking! A multi-millionaire who doesn't pay his debts!

Mr Poppy

Money is nothing to me. I have proved this by giving money to the poor and by sponsoring political campaigns! I made money to help my country!

Mr Orchid

And I have built churches! Churches where your poor people can go and pray for their souls! It is the very soul of Romania that calls us today to act for the sake of tomorrow's children!

Mr Poppy

This is such a populist thing to say. Fortunately, nobody believes you and your kind. We will win the election and reinstate Communism in Romania.

Mr Orchid

When the cuckoo sings in winter! Over my dead body!

Mr Poppy

What is it that you come with in this electoral campaign? Higher wages? That's been promised before! Never happened! Building more churches? We are probably no. 1 in Europe as concerns the number of churches! No abortion? Go tell the young generation they cannot make an abortion! More

discrimination? We have plenty of that in Romania, so help us
God!

Mr Orchid

And you what do you bring on the table? More jobs in a broke
country? Rights for pederasts and adulterers? They should be
banned from our country! They should all go to America!

Mr Poppy

And you should go to a mental institution! My sister was not
in her right mind when she married you, do you forget who you
are, where you come from, a poor shepherd who has made
millions by stealing from the people?

Mr Orchid

Don't bring my wife into the discussion. She has nothing to do
with it! And being a shepherd is the most Romanian profession
one can have!

Mr Poppy

Speaking of your 'nationalism'. You will end up by destroying
the country with your crazy vindications! (looks to the TV
anchor): Mr presenter, these madmen must be stopped. They want
to ban the gay, the communist, the gypsies, the Hungarian, the
German and everyone who is not 'authentically Romanian'. They
are a danger to the society.

Mr Orchid

You are a danger to the society for supporting criminal
elements!

Mr Poppy

One day will come when we are all equal once again and all
that money you have and all those palaces you own will be
given back to those you have stolen them from!

TV anchor

Let's not get too personal in this discussion. I would like to
hear your honest opinions on the candidates.

Mr Orchid

My party, the Neo-Nationalists, are the only hope that this
country will ever come to any good. Their party (gestures
towards Mr Poppy) are what is the worst in this people and
should be eradicated by all means!

Mr Poppy

(gesturing dramatically): I have brought bread and salt to this TV show to share with you and the people at home (looks towards the camera) the traditional values of our country, based on hospitality and good cooking.

Mr Orchid

(laughing ironically)

You bring bread and salt?? What, is this the last supper of your party before it is defeated by mine?

Mr Poppy

(mindfully)

No, Mr Orchid, this is a token of respect for my fellow Romanians whom I promise I will make sure they will have the daily bread on their tables.

Mr Orchid

And I promise they will have the daily pork on their tables! (clicks his fingers, a man appears with a pig on a golden leash). See, this is what I call an electoral campaign pledge.

TV anchor

Gentlemen, this is a TV studio, please take out the pig from here!

Mr Orchid

Let it stay here! It is a symbol of the true values of this country! We are pork eaters, it represents well-being and comfort.

Mr Poppy

It represents the miserable state you're in and it plainly shows that you are a madman!

Mr Orchid

Don't call me a madman! You are the one who drives me crazy!

Mr Poppy

That's because I am right and you are wrong, you hypocrite!

Mr Orchid

Are you calling me a hypocrite? Why don't you tell the people here present how you got your PhD degree?

Mr Poppy

(becoming pale)

What do you mean?

Mr Orchid

You know exactly what I mean you liar!

How you plagiarized your PhD thesis. It was proven in the press. There's no point in denying now.

Mr Poppy

At least I became a doctor. You will always be a mere shepherd. I can still smell the goat cheese off your clothes and skin, you bastard. But, since we are at the moment of truth, perhaps you might want to tell everyone here about your adulterous affairs with other women, how you shamed and cheated on your wife, my poor sister!

Mr Orchid

Calumnies! Lies! I would never cheat on my wife whom I married in the Holy Church in the eyes of God!

Mr Poppy

Perhaps these pictures will refresh your memory. (throws some pictures on the table where we see Mr Orchid kissing and embracing several women in a night club). There! What do you have to say now?

Mr Orchid

That you are a miserable son of a b...to betray your own brother-in-law in such a way! You are the lowest of the low (all of a sudden, music is heard and a whole band enters the studio)

TV anchor

What is this? Was this scheduled (looks with despair at the cameraman who shrugs his shoulders. The band begins to play a traditional Romanian song).

Mr Orchid

See! These are the authentic Romanians! (starts singing with them)

Mr Poppy

What is this circus? Please remove these punks from the studio (the anchor man looks at him helpless).

Mr Orchid

They are the true Romanians who will remove the criminals from
our country.

Mr Poppy

Wait a minute, I have a guest too (the band continues to
play). This is Romania's foremost poet, the people's poet, as
they say. Tell us a poem, will you?

(the band stops playing and we see a man reciting patriotic
verses)

Mr Orchid

This is the crap you want us to listen to tonight? Who is this
guy? Please take him out of here!

Mr Poppy

He will go nowhere. He is here to stay.

Mr Orchid

No way!

Mr Poppy

I'll say!

Mr Orchid

You won't have it your way!

Poet

Please, let me if I may!

Mr Poppy!

Common, man, make my day!

Mr Orchid

I'll go if he stay!

Anchor man

Gentlemen, we have gotten a bit spirited here, maybe it's best
if the musicians and poet left.

(exit poet and musicians)

TV anchor

You were saying, Mr. Mr Poppy?

Mr Poppy

I was saying that my brother-in-law should go to jail. He has
plundered this country, robbed whole properties and

businesses, land and other goods. He is a thief and no one should listen to him.

Mr Orchid

The devil is in you and speaks through your mouth. How can you tell such lies? Mister anchor man, dear audience, let us return to the subject at hand. And the subject is the future of our country. How long will we tolerate abjection and sin among our ranks? How long will we suffer from the Communist curse?

Mr Poppy

Mister anchor man, I would like to add that the Communist Party is the only one in this country who cares about the welfare of its citizens.

The TV anchor

We are finally approaching our topic. What is your platform?

Mr Orchid

Platform? You mean the oil platform I bought last year from a Saudi millionaire?

Mr Poppy

No, idiot, the electoral platform.

Mr Orchid

As I said, we will give bigger wages to the people.

Mr Poppy

What people?

Mr Orchid

The dignitaries, the military, the retired governors.

Mr Poppy

How about the rest?

Mr Orchid

The rest can leave the country!

Mr Poppy

Are you serious?

Mr Orchid

And you too with them. Together with your fake PhD degree. Let's see who will hire you in the West with the expertise you

have. Mr anchor man, he claims to have a PhD in science and he does not even know the water formula.

Mr Poppy

But I own a water company.

Mr Orchid

The best water company in the country. Do you know how many millions he makes off of it? I gave him the tip to buy that company.

Mr Poppy

All this money has gone to supporting Mr Rose. Wait a minute. (goes backstage and returns with a middle-aged man in rumpled clothes who has the air of an intellectual)

Mr Rose

Mr Viola, thank you for inviting me on this show. I would like to tell the audience...

Mr Orchid

Who let this commie imposter in? You are a shame for this show and this country! He is a fag!

Mr Poppy

Watch your language, old fox! You might get a fine!

Mr Orchid

I couldn't care less about fines! Fines! I've paid hundreds of them. You won't scare me with this. Why did you bring the commie candidate to the show?

Mr Poppy

Why, to show everyone what we are made of.

Mr Rose

I believe it is time to brace up and work for the good of this country (notices the pig) - What's with this pig?

Mr Orchid

It's everything you won't be able to offer your electors. The pig is me!

Mr Rose

I was saying that this country, now facing an economic crisis, is in dire need of extreme measures, that will alleviate its

burden. Our strategy is simple: we will take away the money from the rich and give it to the poor.

Mr Orchid

You will not lay a finger on a cent, do you hear me, you prick!

Mr Poppy

Orchid, try to understand, it's for the good of the country.

Mr Orchid

No, it's for the good of the lazy bones like yourself who want to make money out of honest people's work.

Mister Rose

We need to fight and stand up to the evil of neo-nationalism by all means. Although it is a plague that is spreading rapidly throughout Europe, we know we must stand up to it and banish it from our country forever.

(Mr Orchid makes a sign and a waiter comes in with liquor)

Mr Orchid

Mr Rose, perhaps you would like a taste of this fine brandy.

(Mister Rose looks at it shyly, then helps himself with the brandy. They all drink, including the anchor man.)

Mr Poppy

This is really good stuff, must be pretty old.

Mr Orchid

It's from the nineties, original Scottish blend

Mister Rose

Mr Orchid, are you coming to the poker game tonight?

Mr Orchid

Of course I am. Poppy here is coming along too.

Mister Poppy (taking another drink)

We sure are gonna have a hell of a time tonight. Mr Orchid, are you bringing the hostesses you brought the last time.

Mr Orchid

By my word, I am. In fact, they are here right now.

(clicks his fingers and a group of belly dancers appear in the studio. They start dancing near the guests with lascivious movements. We hear Turkish music)

Mr Poppy

You know, Orchid, I've always loved you, my brother. I would kill someone for your sake.

Mr Orchid

(with a belly dancer on his lap)

There's no brother like my brother. I love you too!!

Mr Poppy (in tears)

I am sorry I said all the things I said!

Mr Orchid (in tears too)

I am sorry too!

(they embrace to the sound of Turkish music and squealing from the pig)

End of play