

The Coat ...and Its Curious Travels

By Nikki Harmon

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DEDICATION
Allen Stewart-Coates

STORY OF THE PLAY

Ever forced to wait and wait...and wait? Want to scream at nonsensical bureaucracy? Then you'll sympathize with Mr. Poosch who, after he accidentally leaves his well-made coat in the country to the North, finds tremendous hurdles when he attempts to get it back. First, he cannot obtain the right paperwork to travel, and then, when he finally arrives, it is Sunday and the country is closed on Sundays. A homeless man finds the coat and finds his luck turns around while wearing it. Meanwhile, poor Mr. Poosch finds himself broke, hungry, and laboring in the street. He's even mugged by a dog! Finding he doesn't much care for a life of fame and money, the homeless man gives Mr. Poosch his coat after an accidental meeting. While Mr. Poosch finally and happily returns to a stable life, we see bureaucracy hits full swing with another victim! Full evening.

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 1 w, 5 flex; total of 9 with doubling, 42 w/o doubling.)

POOSCH: From the country to the South.
UNKNOWN WOMAN: A member of a secret society.
UNKNOWN MAN: A member of a secret society.
HOMELESS MAN: From the country to the North

PERSON ONE

Minister of Exits
Deputy of Border Crossings
(North to South.)
Townsperson One
Immigration Officer One
Master Builder
Underground Leader
Provincial Governor
Person Behind

PERSON THREE

Man at Train
Banker
Prime Minister
Minister of Information (VO)
Townsperson Three
Fourth Person in Line
Senior Border Guard

PERSON FIVE

Police Officer
Band Leader
Stockbroker
Waiting Man
Deputy of Immigration
Waiter
Minister of Needs

PERSON TWO

Minister of Entrances
Deputy of Border
Crossings (South to North.)
Townsperson Two
Immigration Officer Two
Architect
Master of Ceremonies
Real Senior Border Guard
Ticket Seller
Person in Front

PERSON FOUR

Dog
Bureau Chief (VO)
Café Owner
Mayor
Cleaning Person
Minster of Requests
Border Guard

OS VOICES

Cheerleaders

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SETTING/TIME

The country to the south and the town just north of the border. Present day.

COSTUMES/PROP

Persons 1-5 may have as little as a single piece of costume and/or prop that tells us at a glance who they are.

SCENE CHANGES

The stage represents many locations. The scene changes are done with lights, with the actors moving fluidly from area to area, so the audience can see they're in different locations/times. The lights, when Poosch is in the South, are white, and snap into color when he crosses the border.

The stage can have a unit Kafkaesque set, or be bare of props except as needed.

Personas for the crew may be created so that when they're onstage they'll blend into the cast.

See scene breakdown at end of script.

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ACT I
Scene 1

(AT RISE: CS are two desks side by side, or a partner desk. The MINISTER OF EXITS and the MINISTER OF ENTRANCES are working at their respective desks. The cold winter sun is streaming in. Light snowflakes are falling US if possible.)

MIN OF INFORMATION: *(VO.)* Attention! Attention! The Ministry is pleased to announce that the combined efforts of Departments Seven and Forty-Six, sub levels A and B have pushed us over the top! Surpassing the departmental goal of ten thousand five hundred pounds of documents to *eleven* thousand two hundred pounds! An extraordinary feat to be sure. Let's hear it for Seven and Forty-Six, A and B.

(SFX: Applause. BOTH MINISTERS nod their heads. POOSCH enters without a coat. He stands patiently waiting but neither Minister acknowledges his presence. Pooch coughs.)

MIN OF ENTRANCES: *(To POOSCH.)* Yes?

POOSCH: I've lost my coat.

MIN OF ENTRANCES: The Office of Lost Items. Two doors down, one flight up.

(Both MINS return to work.)

POOSCH: You don't understand.

MIN OF ENTRANCES: You were on a trip somewhere. You left your coat. When you got where you were going your coat stayed where you had been.

POOSCH: Yes.

MIN OF ENTRANCES: *(Going back to work.)* I thought so.

POOSCH: You have to help me!

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MIN OF ENTRANCES: This is not the right department. You must go to the right department. Two doors down and one flight up. That's the right department. Not this one. This is the wrong one.

POOSCH: But—

MIN OF ENTRANCES: Go away!

POOSCH: They called. The people who have my coat. I must go there today to get it they said. They can't/won't send it here. I don't know which. They didn't say.

MIN OF ENTRANCES: Ah!

POOSCH: Yes?

MIN OF ENTRANCES: You want to *go* somewhere.

POOSCH: Yes!

MIN OF ENTRANCES: That's different. This is the right department.

POOSCH: Then you can help me?

MIN OF ENTRANCES: No.

POOSCH: No?

MIN OF ENTRANCES: No. I am the Minister of Entrances. You need to see the Minister of Exits.

MIN OF EXITS: (*Popping up HIS head.*) You want to go somewhere?

POOSCH: To the first town North of the border.

MIN OF EXITS: No. Sorry. All visas there have been canceled. Pick another place.

POOSCH: I can't. My coat is there.

MIN OF EXITS: Lots of people go South. Good for the health. Warm weather. Cheap if you go this time of year.

POOSCH: But my coat isn't there.

MIN OF EXITS: Pity.

POOSCH: But...

MIN OF EXITS: Come back next week. Next week we'll have visas. (*Going back to work.*) Not this week.

POOSCH: There are things in my coat. Important things.

MIN OF EXITS: State secrets?

POOSCH: (*Sensing an opportunity.*) Possibly.

MIN OF EXITS: That's different. (*Handing HIM a form.*) Fill this out.

POOSCH: Certainly.

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(POOSCH fills out the form as we hear an announcement.)

MIN OF INFORMATION: *(VO.)* The final count of this month's output has Department Twelve in top position with seventy-seven percent, leading the Ministry's previous month-end output by an unprecedented two percent. Good going, Twelve.

(Both MINS nod approvingly.)

MIN OF ENTRANCES: I knew someone once in Twelve. Moved up from Eleven in only six months. Skipped Ten altogether.

MIN OF EXITS: Still there? In Twelve?

MIN OF ENTRANCES: Oh, no. They don't let you stay in Twelve very long. Burnout, you know. Move them out, they do. Right out of there and into Thirteen. That's best for everyone.

MIN OF EXITS: That so?

MIN OF ENTRANCES: Yes.

MIN OF EXITS: Hummmmm.

POOSCH: Excuse me.

MIN OF EXITS: Yes?

POOSCH: Line five, section twenty-four. It says to attach my identification papers.

MIN OF EXITS: Important. Yes. Must do that. Can't process the form without it.

POOSCH: I can't attach them.

MIN OF EXITS: Political reasons?

POOSCH: Logistical. They're in my coat.

MIN OF EXITS: And the coat is not with you.

POOSCH: Exactly.

MIN OF EXITS: Your coat is out of the country and you are in the country.

POOSCH: Yes.

MIN OF EXITS: Your coat with your identification papers is *out* of the country and you, without your identification papers, are *in* the country.

POOSCH: *(Apprehensive.)* Yes.

End of Freeview

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