

Plot synopsis

For a one-act play, entitled

Contrat, ou pas de contract?

(English translation : *Deal or No Deal ?*)

Three contract negotiators, John Bull, Randy Gonzalez, and Simone de Bellevue, are brought to the same room in a chain hotel, and locked inside by a mysterious maître d'. They represent different companies, each of which is bidding for a major contract with Lucifer Industries.

They had expected to meet a representative of Lucifer Industries, and to give Powerpoint presentations on why their respective bids should be accepted. Instead they find a well-furnished basement room, with no other people present. A heated serving dish in one corner of the room contains giant pretzels, the smell of which is slightly nauseating. John Bull turns on an extractor fan.

Before the meeting, John, Randy and Simone had each received a letter from Lucifer pointing out that their companies' bids contained false information. According to the letter, Lucifer is trying to decide whether to disqualify some or all of them from further involvement in the bidding process, and whether to notify the regulatory authorities about their actions.

At first, none of them will admit that they have supplied false information. John says he was summoned to the meeting because his lawyers didn't provide a marked-up draft by the agreed deadline. Randy complains that his company has done nothing wrong, and that the CEO of Lucifer is trying to award the contract to Simone's company in an unfair way. According to Randy, the CEO is hoping to be elected as the President of Archangel College, and the CEO of Simone's company is Chairman of the recruitment panel.

Simone retorts that Randy has been trying to fix the bidding process by blackmail. It later turns out that Simone has been having a secret affair with a well-known French politician, which Randy knows.

When no-one from Lucifer turns up at the meeting, Simone surmises that they have been brought together to resolve between them who should be awarded the bid. For this to work, she says they must be honest about what is wrong with the information that they have supplied to Lucifer. Simone starts the discussion by admitting that her company has been under investigation by the European Commission for breach of competition laws, and there is a risk that they will be fined several million Euros in the near future. This could result in them being banned from supplying products to the US Government, which, in turn, could cause Lucifer major problems. They failed to disclose this when required in the bidding documents.

Randy admits that his company has been the subject of a US Government investigation for alleged supply of products to North Korea, in breach of export control laws. They failed to disclose this when required in the bidding documents.

John admits that his company has been the subject of a UK Government investigation for alleged bribery of a member of the Saudi Arabian royal family. They failed to disclose this when required in the bidding documents.

John suggests that there is no point in them discussing these matters further; it is up to Lucifer Industries who they will pick, or whether they will pick any of them as suppliers.

Randy and Simone turn on John, accusing him of weakness. Randy picks up a paperknife and seems to be about to stab John, when a fire alarm goes off. It stops after a few seconds, but it is long enough for the atmosphere to change. Randy jokes about the incident.

John points out that Simone's company is subsidised by the French government, and can therefore undercut the prices of Randy and John's companies. Randy expresses shock at this news, and suggests that he should call a friend who is a journalist at the Wall Street Journal, to alert him to this terrible situation.

Simone tells John that his company's products are not compliant with European Union rules on electrical emissions, and that she has a friend in the European Commission who could require all of their products to be withdrawn immediately from sale or use.

Simone tells Randy that she has photographs of him in a gay sauna in Bangkok, and that she feels duty-bound to tell the President of Randy's company, who is well-known to be a bible-thumping, traditional Christian.

Exasperated, John again asks everyone to stop bickering, and this time silence ensues for a few minutes.

During this time, the maître d' opens the door. He is accompanied by a waiter who removes the pretzels and replaces them with some pastries. "Compliments of the 'ouse", says the maître d', as he leaves.

Randy checks the door, which is locked. He moves over to the pastries and selects two chocolate croissants. Simone looks at him with disgust.

Simone starts to speak, but John interrupts. He tells them that he doesn't care who gets the contract, as long as he gets a share of the commission. Simone shakes her head. Randy concentrates on chewing his croissants. The maître d' arrives and beckons John to come with him. They both leave.

Randy looks up from his pastries, and say, "well, you played that right, Simone". She slaps him in the face, then bangs her fist on the door, calling out for the maître d'. There is no response.

Silence for several minutes. Then Randy asks, "when the merger goes through, will you be needing a US-based Vice President?"

Simone looks up, surprised. She nods. The maître d' arrives, clearly expecting Simone to come with him. Randy moves over to the door, saying "I think it's me you're wanting this time." The maître d' shrugs and gestures for Randy to accompany him. Simone watches as Randy and the maître d' leave the room.

She slumps into a chair and holds her head in her hands. After a few minutes, she rouses herself, and checks her appearance in a mirror. The CEO of Lucifer Industries enters the room. "Bonjour, Simone" he says. She smiles at him, and invites him to take a seat. The scene closes with her pointing a clicker at a computer, to start a Powerpoint presentation.