

Script Sample

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Ubu Roi

**by Alfred Jarry
in a translation by Rob Melrose**

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Ubu Roi was first presented at the Théâtre de l’Oeuvre on December 10, 1896 with the collaboration of Madames Louise France (Mother Ubu) and Irma Perrot (Queen Rosemonde); and Monsiers Gémier (Father Ubu), Dujeu (King Wenceslas), Nolot (The Tzar), G. Flandre (Captain Bordure), Buteaux, Charley, Séverin-Mars, Lugné-Poe, Verse, Dally, Carpentier, Michelez, etc. – and with puppets (January – February 1898).

Restored in its integrity as it was presented by the marionettes of the Théâtre des Phynances in 1888.

Jarry’s Dedication:

This book is dedicated to Marcel Schwob

And thus Father Ubu shakes his pear, who was then named by the English Shakespeare, and we have from him many beautiful plays written.

This translation was first read at a part of The Cutting Ball Theater’s Hidden Classics Reading series at the EXIT Café in San Francisco on April 30, 2007. The reading was directed by Sean Daniels with the following cast:

| | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------|
| Father Ubu | Avery Monsen |
| Mother Ubu | Ponder Goddard |
| Bordure, Pile & Others | John Russell |
| King Wenceslas, Cotice & Others | Walker Fisher |
| Queen Rosemonde, Giron & Others | Briana Gantsweg |
| Bougrelas & Others | Peter Cameron |

Characters

Father Ubu
Mother Ubu
Captain Bordure
King Wenceslas
Queen Rosemonde
Boleslas – their son
Ladislav – their son
Bougrelas – their son
The Shades of the Ancestors
General Lascy
Stanislas Leczinski
Jean Sobieski
Nicholas Rensky
Emperor Alexis

Giron – paladin
Pile – paladin
Cotice – paladin
Conspiritors and Soldiers
People
Michael Federovitch
Nobles
Magistrates
Advisors
Financiers
Flunkies of Phynances
Peasants
The Entire Russian Army
The Entire Polish Army
Mother Ubu’s Gardes
A Captain
A Bear
A Phynancial Horse
The Disembraining Machine
The Crew
The Captain of the Ship

Act 1, Scene 1

FATHER UBU

“To shit or...”

MOTHER UBU

Oh! That’s a pretty one, Father Ubu! You are a big fat hooligan.

FATHER UBU

I should club you over the head, Mother Ubu!

MOTHER UBU

It’s not me, Father Ubu, it’s someone else you should assassinate.

FATHER UBU

By my green candle, I don’t understand.

MOTHER UBU

What, Father Ubu, you’re content with what you’ve got?

FATHER UBU

By my green candle, ma'am, yes of course I'm content. I'd be happy with less: Captain of Dragoons, trusted officer of King Wenceslas, decorated in the order of the Red Eagle of Poland and former king of Aragon, what more do you want?

MOTHER UBU

What! After being the king of Aragon, you're content to lead the inspections of fifty-some stooges armed with cabbage cutters, when you could fit your nut with the crown of Poland as well as Aragon?

FATHER UBU

Ah, Mother Ubu, I don't understand anything you say.

MOTHER UBU

You are so stupid!

FATHER UBU

By my green candle, the king of Wenceslas is still alive, and even if he died, doesn't he have legions of children?

MOTHER UBU

Who's stopping you from massacring the whole family and putting yourself in their place?

FATHER UBU

Ah! Mother Ubu, you insult me and you will soon spend some time in the saucepan.

MOTHER UBU

Ah! Poor sap, if I'm in the saucepan, who'll mend the seat of your pants?

FATHER UBU

Oh really! So what? Don't I have an ass like everyone else's?

MOTHER UBU

If I were you, I would want to put my ass on a throne. You could add to your riches indefinitely, eat sausages all the time, and live in style.

FATHER UBU

If I were king, I would have them make me a big bonnet like I had in Aragon, the one the greedy Spaniards impudently stole.

MOTHER UBU

You could also get yourself an umbrella and a great coat that would come down to your heels.

FATHER UBU

Ah! I give in to temptation. Damn to shit, shit to damn, if I ever come across him in a dark part of the woods, he'll have a pretty miserable quarter of an hour.

MOTHER UBU

Ah good, Father Ubu, look how you've become a real man.

FATHER UBU

Oh no! Me, Captain of Dragoons, massacre the king of Poland! Better to die!

MOTHER UBU (aside)

Oh! To shit!

(out loud)

And so you want to stay poor as a rat, Father Ubu.

FATHER UBU

Sacrepoo, by my green candle, I would rather be poor as a good, thin rat than rich like a mean, fat cat.

MOTHER UBU

And the bonnet? And the umbrella? And the great coat?

FATHER UBU

And what then, Mother Ubu?

(he leaves closing the door)

MOTHER UBU

Shoot! Tashit, he's tough at first, but shoot to shit, I think I've worn him down all the same. Thanks to God and to myself, maybe in eight days I'll be queen of Poland.

Act 1, scene 2

(the scene represents a room of Father Ubu's house when one splendid table is dressed. Both on stage)

MOTHER UBU

Ah, our guests are really late.

FATHER UBU

Yes, by my green candle. I'm dying of hunger. Mother Ubu, you're looking particularly ugly this evening. Is it because we are having guests?

MOTHER UBU (shrugging her shoulders)

Tashit.

FATHER UBU (seizing a roasted chicken)
Look, I'm hungry. I'll sink my teeth into this bird. It's a chicken, I think. It isn't bad.

MOTHER UBU
What are you doing you sap? What will our guests eat?

FATHER UBU
There'll still be enough for them. I won't touch anything more. Mother Ubu, go to the window and see if our guests have arrived.

MOTHER UBU (going)
I don't see anything.

(while she looks, Father Ubu steals a slice of veal)

Ah! There's Captain Bordure and his followers. What are you eating, Father Ubu?

FATHER UBU
Nothing, a bit of veal.

MOTHER UBU
Ah! The veal! Veal! He ate the veal! Help!

FATHER UBU
By my green candle, I'll tear out your eyes.

(The door opens)

Scene III

FATHER UBU. MOTHER UBU, CAPTAIN BORDURE and his followers

MOTHER UBU
Hello, gentlemen, we have been impatiently awaiting your arrival. Please, sit down.

CAPTAIN BORDURE
Hello, madam. But where's Father Ubu?

FATHER UBU
Here I am! Here I am! Criminy! By my green candle, I'm fat enough.

CAPTAIN BORDURE
Hello, Father Ubu. Sit down, men.

(they all sit down)

FATHER UBU

Oof, a little more and I'd have broke through my chair.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

Well Mother Ubu, what delicious thing have you cooked up for us today?

MOTHER UBU

Here is the menu.

FATHER UBU

Oh, now this interests me.

MOTHER UBU

Soup polonaise, side of rastron, veal, chicken, pâté of dog, rump of turkey, charlotte russe...

FATHER UBU

Ah! That's enough I suppose. Is there anything else?

MOTHER UBU (continuing)

Ice pudding, salad, fruits, dessert, gruel, Jerusalem artichokes, cauliflower à la shit.

FATHER UBU

Oh, do you think I am the emperor of the Orient with all this expense!

MOTHER UBU

Don't listen to him; he's an imbecile.

FATHER UBU

Ah! I'm going to whet my teeth on your calves.

MOTHER UBU

Eat instead, Father Ubu. Here is your soup polonaise.

FATHER UBU

Ug, it's bad.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

It's not good, in any case.

MOTHER UBU

You bunch of brutes, what do you want?

FATHER UBU (hitting his forehead)

Oh! I have an idea. I'll be back in a minute.

MOTHER UBU

Gentlemen, let's taste the veal.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

It's very good; I'm done.

MOTHER UBU

On to the turkey rumps!

CAPTAIN BORDURE

Exquisite, exquisite! Long live Mother Ubu.

ALL

Long live Mother Ubu!

FATHER UBU (reentering)

And you will soon be crying, "Long live Father Ubu!"

(He takes an unmentionable brush and hurls it on the feast)

MOTHER UBU

Miserable Beast, what are you doing?

FATHER UBU

Taste a bit.

(Most of them taste and fall down poisoned)

FATHER UBU

Mother Ubu, pass me the sides of rastron so that I can serve them.

MOTHER UBU

Here they are.

FATHER UBU

Out the door everyone! Captain Bordure, I need to speak with you.

THE OTHERS

But we haven't eaten yet.

FATHER UBU

What do you mean you haven't eaten yet? Out the door, everyone! Stay, Bordure.

(no one moves)

FATHER UBU

You haven't left? By my green candle, I'll knock you out with a side of rastron.

(he starts to throw them at the others)

THE OTHERS

Oh! Aiiiie! Help! Defend us! Oh no! I am dead!

FATHER UBU

To shit, shit, shit. Out the door! I've made myself clear.

THE OTHERS

Every man for himself! Miserable Father Ubu! Traitor and deceitful hoodlum!

FATHER UBU

Ah! Look, they're going. I can breathe easy, but I haven't eaten yet. Come Bordure.

(They leave with MOTHER UBU)

Scene 4

(FATHER UBU, MOTHER UBU, and CAPTAIN BORDURE)

FATHER UBU

Well, Captain, did you have a nice meal?

CAPTAIN BORDURE

Very nice, except for the shit.

FATHER UBU

Ah! The shit wasn't bad.

MOTHER UBU

To each his taste.

FATHER UBU

Captain Bordure, I've decided to make you the Duke of Lithuania.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

How? I thought you were in the gutter, Father Ubu.

FATHER UBU

In a few days, if you like, I will reign in Poland.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

You're going to kill Venceslas?

FATHER UBU

This guy's not stupid, he figured it out.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

If this is about killing Wenceslas, I'm in. I am his mortal enemy and I can answer for my men.

FATHER UBU (throwing himself on him and kissing him)

Oh, oh! I love you so much Bordure.

CAPTAIN BORDURE

Oh, you stink, Father Ubu. Do you ever wash?

FATHER UBU

Rarely.

MOTHER UBU

Never!

FATHER UBU

I'm going to stomp on your foot.

MOTHER UBU

Fat shit!

FATHER UBU

Go Bordure. I'm finished with you. But by my green candle, I swear on Mother Ubu that you will be the Duke of Lithuania.

MOTHER UBU

But...

FATHER UBU

Quiet, my sweet child.

(They exit)

Scene V
(FATHER UBU, MOTHER UBU, A
MESSENGER)

FATHER UBU

Sir, what do you want? Get out of here, you're bothering me.

A MESSENGER

Sir, you are called to appear before the king.

(he exits)

FATHER UBU

Oh! Shits, garnished-cotton-poo, by my green candle, I've been found out. I'll be beheaded! Alas! Alas!

MOTHER UBU

What a weak man! And time is running out.

FATHER UBU

Oh! I have an idea. I will say that it was Mother Ubu and Bordure.

MOTHER UBU

Oh fat FU, if you do that...

FATHER UBU

Eh! I'll go right away.

(he goes)

MOTHER UBU (running after him)

Oh! Father Ubu, Father Ubu, I'll give you some of this sausage.

(she exits)

FATHER UBU

Oh tashit! You're a sausage yourself.

End of Script Sample

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