

**Community  
by  
Nancy Beverly**

Nancy Beverly  
13449 Riverside Dr. C  
Sherman Oaks, CA 91423  
818/379-9940 (h)  
818/681-5192 (c)

March 10, 2013

ACT ONE

Lights up on ELLIOT, an actor, 40's, standing center on a bare stage, auditioning. The person to whom he is speaking is at the back of the house. This is director PATTI, 40's, who consults her script now and then. Elliot doesn't glance at his script at all.

ELLIOT

'Herb, we have to press on. Thomas Edison: "If I find 10,000 ways something won't work, I haven't failed. I am not discouraged because every wrong attempt discarded --

PATTI

(as Herb)  
-- is another step forward."

ELLIOT

'How many times did Colonel Sanders get turned down before his chicken recipe was accepted?'

PATTI

'One thousand nine.'

ELLIOT

'How old was he when he decided to franchise?'

PATTI

'Sixty-five.'

ELLIOT

'Well, Herb, we're 20 years younger and we've had a lot less rejection. Time, energy and talent are on our side. We're not afraid of hard work and one day, one day, my friend, the world will bow to us because it will be ready for...'

ELLIOT/PATTI

'The automatic window washer.'

Wild applause from Patti, who leaps up and hurries down the aisle to join Elliot on stage. Patti is a dynamo -- although if she could focus, just imagine the possibilities.

PATTI

That was WONDERFUL! Omigod, Elliot, we never get such talent out here! Okay, that's not true, our resident company is fabulous, but YOU, you have... what-is-it-what-is-it-what-is-it...

ELLIOT  
...Talent?

They both laugh a big laugh.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
So, Patti, you said the play opens  
June fifth and runs six weeks --

PATTI  
-- Yes, and we might extend it but --  
PROFESSIONALISM.

Huh? Oh:

ELLIOT  
That's the word you --

PATTI  
(overlapping)  
-- Yes, you have that air, that  
energy. You are a professional.

ELLIOT  
Thank you.

PATTI  
(barreling on)  
So we might extend a few weeks, but  
*Dracula* starts in August.

ELLIOT  
*Dracula* in August..?

PATTI  
I know, it'll be so fucking hot out  
here and whoever plays *Dracula* is  
going to DIE in that cape.  
(brightly)  
Are you going to try out?

ELLIOT  
Ah, let's see how things go with  
*Marvin and his Marvelous Invention*.

PATTI  
Oh, yes, absolutely. Now, let me  
check your availability...

She shuffles papers and consults a form he filled out.

PATTI (CONT'D)  
Oooo... looks as if you're all clear!

ELLIOT  
As of right now.  
(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'm always auditioning but I don't have anything booked for June.

PATTI

'Booked,' listen to you. You're out there doing the whole professional thing. I teach during the day. High school art! Teenagers!

She screams, they laugh.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Anyway, we have one more night of auditions, so let me know if you 'book' something in the next 24 hours.

ELLIOT

I will, Patti. But I've always wanted to do *Marvin*. I did a couple of Bickell and Mason plays in high school -- you know, those old chestnuts -- *Dinner with the Iversons* --

PATTI

-- I played the youngest daughter in high school --

ELLIOT

-- I was the father --

PATTI

-- I'll bet you were a stitch --

ELLIOT

-- 'Bring me the alligator NOW!'

They laugh.

PATTI

Well, Elliot, we'll be in touch!

She winks at him, then exits as Elliot turns to ALLISON and MAGNUS, who are now entering. The three converge at a cafe table for coffee.

ELLIOT

And then she winked at me.

ALLISON

You have the part. Or she has a nervous tick.

Allison does a nervous wink several times and they all laugh. Allison, 40's, is an old friend of Elliot's and a sharp cookie who works as a financial planner. Magnus is her co-worker.

He's younger than they are by a few years and is a man of many talents. For him, the glass is always half-full.

MAGNUS

Where's the theatre, Elliot?

ELLIOT

Between Glendale and Pasadena at the foot of the San Gabriel Mountains.

MAGNUS

It sounds beautiful.

ELLIOT

It is. And it gives Westsiders a chance to get east of Dodger Stadium.

ALLISON

Hey, I'm the loyal friend who drove to San Pedro to see you in some crazy musical about J. Ed--

ELLIOT

-- J. Edgar Hoover, yes, the true test of friendship, a long drive to see bad art.

Magnus laughs, then:

MAGNUS

So the part's yours?

ELLIOT

Not yet, but if she doesn't give it to me, it's because a bomb fell on the place.

ALLISON

Which we wouldn't want.

ELLIOT

No, we wouldn't. It's a beautiful theatre -- historic landmark -- it seats about 150, lots of parking, nice bathrooms, cute restaurants on the town square, and a very loyal subscription audience so you don't have to worry about playing to six nuns bused in from St. Mary of the Woods.

Allison has a funny look on her face.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

What, Coach? 'Buy low, sell high?'

ALLISON

You're taking a part because the  
bathrooms and parking are nice??

ELLIOT

I am not. I love the part. I've  
wanted to do it for years. It's  
tailor-made for me -- a big comedy  
with physical humor. I'm just  
thrilled it's at a nice theatre.  
And it doesn't even matter that --

He stops himself. They stare.

MAGNUS

That?

ELLIOT

It's a community theatre.

MAGNUS

Aren't we all in communities?

ELLIOT

Yes, yes we are, Magnus, thank you.  
And may I add some community theaters --  
like Foothill -- pay more than the  
awful Equity Waver 99 seat plan.

MAGNUS

What's the 99 seat plan?

ELLIOT

It's... you know what? It's boring.

MAGNUS

I'm not bored. I love learning new  
stuff.

ELLIOT

Bless you.

MAGNUS

So what's the 99 seat plan?

ELLIOT

It's a way for small theaters to  
operate.

MAGNUS

With ninety-nine seats.

ELLIOT

Or less.  
(to Allison)  
He's quick.

MAGNUS  
And why is it awful?

Allison watches Elliot squirm a bit.

ELLIOT  
Actors Equity, my union, has a nice pay scale, but if all the theaters in L.A. paid it, the small ones would bite the dust. So, they waive the pay scale, we do a lot of theatre but we don't get paid a lot of money.

MAGNUS  
Like what, minimum wage??

Ouch, Elliot's heart and ego take a blow. Allison jumps in.

ALLISON  
Something like that. So what's the play about, Ellie?

ELLIOT  
(recovering)  
It's, uh... it's set in the late 1950's and revolves around a madcap inventor and his nutty neighbor and the crazy invention they -- wait -- I'm not going to spoil it for you guys. Come and see it -- if I get the part. And then after the show we can have dinner at the quaint Italian restaurant I saw on the square.

MAGNUS

That sounds lovely. I can't wait.

They smile and connect. Allison notices and looks pleased.

ALLISON

Thank God Magnus joined our office -- he's my new theatre buddy. That way Ed can have his ESPN and I can have my culture.

MAGNUS

I love culture -- there's so much in L.A. I want to explore.

ELLIOT

I make a great tour guide. Sunsets on the coast at Malibu, wine and cheese under the stars at the Hollywood Bowl, Sunday brunch at the Abbey in West Hollywood...

\*

MAGNUS

Fabulous.

ALLISON

... Should I leave now?

BOTH GUYS

No, no!

They all laugh, then:

ALLISON

Will your agent come all the way out to Foothill?

ELLIOT

He damn well better.

ALLISON

Will critics?

ELLIOT

I haven't checked on that.

ALLISON

(to Magnus)

He got amazing reviews for *Cyrano* a few years ago.

MAGNUS

I'll bet he did.



ALLISON

I've heard *The Times* doesn't go anywhere these days except the big legit houses.

MAGNUS

This one isn't legit?

ELLIOT

(Allison, must you?)

It's a theatre term.

(then)

I'm sure there are local papers. A good review is a good review.

ALLISON

I've heard you complain before about --

ELLIOT

-- Allison, this part meets my goal: a lead in a solid, well-made play at a decent theatre by the time my birthday rolls around this summer.

MAGNUS

I like goals. They give me focus.

ALLISON

He got the first quarter award for most new clients.

ELLIOT

Congratulations. I'd love to hear about your next goal.

MAGNUS

Buying a house with a spectacular view and renovating it.

ELLIOT

That has so much more zing than cleaning out the garage.

MAGNUS

Doesn't it? Right now, though, I must be going, I have another engagement. It was lovely meeting you, Elliot. I look forward to seeing you perform and seeing Los Angeles with you.

ELLIOT

Great meeting you, Magnus.

MAGNUS

See you Monday, Allison.

ALLISON

Bye.

Magnus exits.

ELLIOT

Wow, fun, smart and drop-dead  
gorgeous.

ALLISON

Uh huh.

ELLIOT

I've never had such a catch.

ALLISON

Uh huh.

ELLIOT

I owe you.

ALLISON

Uh huh.

ELLIOT

(then, a wee insecure)  
How old is he?

ALLISON

I don't know actually.

ELLIOT

What if he finds out I touch up the  
gray in my hair?

ALLISON

STOP.

ELLIOT

How much does he know about buying  
and selling homes?

ALLISON

He bought and sold at least couple  
up in Seattle.

ELLIOT

At least?!

ALLISON

STOP! I thought you two would be  
great together. I wouldn't have  
introduced him to just anybody.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(then)

Do you think I should take this part?  
If it's offered?

ALLISON

Of course, why are you even asking?

ELLIOT

You were throwing up red flags.

ALLISON

I was not. You were emphasizing  
parking and rest rooms.

ELLIOT

I just want to work in a theatre I'm  
not ashamed of. Is there anything  
wrong with that?

ALLISON

Not at all.

ELLIOT

AND -- which I couldn't say in front  
of Mr. Financial Planner, Mr. Hugo  
Boss from head to toe -- I will get  
paid a hundred bucks a weekend --  
which means I can finally replace my  
balding tires.

ALLISON

Look at you plowing through goals.

(then)

Would you like a celebratory party  
for this upcoming birthday? Ed and  
I can host.

ELLIOT

No.

ALLISON

Elliot, I did not ask if you wanted  
to club baby seals.

ELLIOT

I don't want a party. By the time  
my birthday rolls around, I want  
assurance that I should still be  
trying to make a living at this  
profession. I want a sign that this  
isn't just a very expensive, time-  
consuming, nerve-wracking, soul-  
draining hobby.

ALLISON

Man, chocolate cake and balloon animals would be so much easier.

ELLIOT

You know, I haven't seen any of their work. I could see *Guys and Dolls* before it closes... I don't wanna see *Guys and Dolls*. Okay, it's a leap of faith. God, what if this Foothill place is AWFUL.

Allison exhales loudly.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

What?

ALLISON

You don't even have the part and you're already starting.

ELLIOT

What??

ALLISON

Sweetie, you chip away til there's a pile of complaints up to your neck.

ELLIOT

I'm a realist.

ALLISON

You're a fatalist.

ELLIOT

It keeps my expectations in line.

She stares at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

That way I'm not disappointed.

She stares at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Okay, I pretend it softens the blow of being disappointed.

ALLISON

... May this part and this play be everything you want them to be.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

Patti enters. Allison exits.

PATTI  
Welcome to Foothill Community Theatre!

ELLIOT  
(to Patti)  
Thank you.

PATTI  
So great to have you with us!

ELLIOT  
Great to be here.

STU enters, Mr. Affable, 40's. The stage manager NEWTON, early 20s, also enters, carrying a very efficient-looking notebook and lots of folders. He gets busy arranging chairs to serve as set pieces.

STU  
Hey -- hey --

PATTI  
And here's your 'Herb' -- Elliot meet Stu, Stu, Elliot, a.k.a 'Marvin.'

ELLIOT  
Nice to meet you.

STU  
Oh, the pleasure is mine. So what's it like to do a film with Don Emerson?

Huh?

PATTI  
... I showed him your resume.

ELLIOT  
Oh. Ah, he's great. Very nice, very funny. And he makes it look so easy.

PATTI  
Just like Stu.

ELLIOT  
No doubt.

STU  
Did he give you any tricks of the trade?

ELLIOT  
No. I had only one scene with him and two lines so our contact was pretty brief.

STU

I love Don Emerson.

ELLIOT

Me, too. So, Patti, where shall we begin?

NEWTON

Tax forms.

PATTI

First we have some tax things for you -- this is Newton, our stage manager.

He's as precise as an atomic clock -- and could go off like an atomic bomb. He hands papers to Elliot.

NEWTON

Black ink. It Xeroxes better.

ELLIOT

Cal Tech student?

NEWTON

Molecular biology. Press hard.

ELLIOT

I will. And yet you do theatre.

NEWTON

I needed an evening job that didn't involve food service.

ELLIOT

I completely understand.

STU

Do you have a day job?

ELLIOT

Not at the moment.

STU

You make your living acting??

ELLIOT

Sometimes. I just did a couple of guest appearances on *General H----*

PATTI

*General Hospital!* I used to watch it all the time in college! Did you get to meet the woman who plays the crazy --

NEWTON

-- Tax forms??

ELLIOT

I'll get them to you at the first  
break.

Newton stares at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Promise.

(to Patti)

Ready to start?

PATTI

You bet. Oh -- and you'll see a 4th  
of July barbecue flyer in your  
paperwork -- we have one every year --

STU

-- Wait til you see my swan dive,  
clears the pool out in seconds.

PATTI

And there's a sign-up sheet in the  
green room for what you want to bring.  
Stu's wife Jeanette makes a killer  
potato salad, so don't go there.

ELLIOT

Duly noted.

He puts the flyer and tax forms with his satchel, picks up his script, signaling he's ready to begin. Newton takes a seat. Stu has his script, Patti gets hers. She closes her eyes, takes a deep breath. It's as if she's tuning into the script telepathically. Finally:

PATTI

... I'm seeing orange.

Huh? Elliot looks at Stu, Stu mouths, "Hang on a minute."

PATTI (CONT'D)

... The color of passion. That's  
what Herb and Marvin are. Okay, Act  
I, Scene 1, get up there and move it  
around.

ELLIOT

... Do you want me flat on the couch,  
like it says in the stage directions?

PATTI

What do you feel like doing?

ELLIOT

That feels good.

He lies down on three chairs that serve as a couch.

PATTI

Herbie, where do you want to be?

STU

Looks as if Herb's coming in the door. Newton?

Newton efficiently moves about the stage as a tour guide.

NEWTON

Front door, upstairs, exit to kitchen, credenza, dining room table, front window.

He sits back down. Stu goes to the front door.

PATTI

Begin.

Stu enters, snoops around, mimes finding a piece of paper on the dining room table, "reads" it. Stu is actually a good actor, by the way.

ELLIOT

Um, Patti, if he's coming in the front door, I can see and hear him. If he comes in the archway from the kitchen, using the back door, we can get that element of surprise I think the script's going for.

PATTI

Absolutely. Herb?

STU

I'm on it.

He goes to the kitchen area and re-enters, snoops again, find the imaginary paper, reads it.

STU (CONT'D)

'The bastards.'

ELLIOT

'Ahhhh!'

STU

'How could they not give us a contract and why didn't you tell me??'

ELLIOT

'Why didn't you knock?'



STU

'I knocked, I called, I you-hooded,  
you've been avoiding me, Marvin.'

ELLIOT

(to Patti)

I'm feeling the need to move.

PATTI

Then move.

NEWTON

Do you want me to write this down?

PATTI

If we keep it.

NEWTON

You need to let me know.

She waves him off, "Yeah, yeah."

PATTI

(cheery)

Begin.

ELLIOT

'I couldn't bear to tell you, Herb.'

STU

'I say the door's not shut, I say we  
call them right now -- Bo Peep  
Enterprises needs to know we're  
contenders, and that they need to  
manufacture the automated baby  
washer.'

ELLIOT

'You know, Herb, I've been  
thinking...'

(to Patti)

I'm about to get into paperwork and  
specs, where's my desk?

NEWTON

Do we need a desk?

PATTI

The dining room table should work.

ELLIOT

... These guys been scheming for  
years, wouldn't Marvin have his own  
desk or workbench piled high with  
all of their rejection letters and  
spare parts?

PATTI

He probably works in the basement or out in the garage.

ELLIOT

But in a few scenes, the stage directions say he's working on the window washer unit in the 'alcove.'

NEWTON

Do we need an alcove?

PATTI

I have a meeting with the set designer later this week, I'll mention it.

ELLIOT

... Is this floor plan not from the set designer?

PATTI

Not yet. It's something I cooked up.

ELLIOT

So our blocking...

PATTI

We'll re-block later.

Newton stares daggers at her.

PATTI (CONT'D)

That's why they invented the eraser, Newton.

(to Elliot)

For now, just use the dining room table.

ELLIOT

Okay. Where do you want us to take it from?

PATTI

Wherever.

Elliot reigns in his irritation.

ELLIOT

(to Stu)

How about 'I've been thinking.'

STU

Got it.

ELLIOT

'You know, Herb, I've been thinking...'

(crosses to dining room table)

'Remember when Muriel nearly fell off that ladder washing the second story windows last spring?'

STU

'How could I forget -- I could hear her scream over the lawn mower.'

ELLIOT

'I've been doodling...'

STU

'I love it when you doodle.'

ELLIOT

'An automated window washer. It attaches to the outside of a window frame, at the top, and then with the press of a simple button indoors, you can --'

Just then, Patti's CELL PHONE RINGS. She waves at the guys, "Just a sec" as she answers it.

PATTI

CURTIS! Where are you?! The school called me at TWO!

She heads off to the wings.

STU

This'll take a minute.

(then)

So you went to Julliard for acting?

ELLIOT

I did.

STU

Was it all that it's cracked up to be?

ELLIOT

Yeah -- brutally competitive, but yeah.

STU

Sheesh, I would've wilted like mayonnaise in the Mojave. How'd you end up in L.A.?

ELLIOT

I flew.

Stu laughs, Elliot smiles, tries to get the questions off of him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

How about you? What's your background?

STU

I've worked at the post office for 15 years -- I trained on the front lines of customer service!

They smile.

ELLIOT

No theatre degree, no scene study classes..?

STU

My wife Jeanette -- she teaches English in Pasadena -- she dragged me to see *Glengarry Glenross* at Westside Rep --

ELLIOT

-- Oh my God, the crackerjack dialogue --

STU

-- The double-dealings, the desperation --

ELLIOT

-- I was riveted --

STU

-- Right there with ya. Then we came here to see *The Foreigner* and I fell out of my seat laughing -- and Jeanette said, 'You could do that, you're always joking with the customers, why don't you try out?' So one Saturday I was bored -- okay, I didn't want to paint the garage -- and I thought, what the heck. I came over and auditioned for *Greater Tuna* and got in. That was five years ago and now I've got this great hobby.

ELLIOT

That's... wonderful. Good to have a hobby.

PATTI

(off)

NO, CURTIS, YOU MAY NOT DRIVE TO  
VEGAS FOR MEMORIAL DAY WEEKEND.

STU

My daughter's 15. Molly. She's an  
angel. I don't know how Patti does  
it. Kids?

ELLIOT

No.

STU

Wife?

ELLIOT

No. No significant other.

STU

That's code for 'I'm gay,' right?

ELLIOT

Right.

STU

(brightly)

Well, if I hear of anyone...

ELLIOT

Uh, thanks, Stu.

PATTI

(off)

NO, YOU MAY NOT DRIVE TO TIJUANA,  
EITHER!

STU

I think I'll give Jeanette a jingle.  
I left my jeans drying on the porch  
and I need her to take them in before  
the sprinkler goes on.

Stu grabs his cell phone and goes off into the wings. Elliot looks over at Newton. Neither of them wants to make small talk and after a few uncomfortable moments, they both grab their cell phones. Newton heads out into the lobby via the audience. Elliot speed dials a number.

ELLIOT

... Darlene, Elliot here, how are  
you?... Wonderful... Alvin didn't  
return my last two calls. Did you  
tell him about *Marvin and His  
Marvelous Invention*? What did he  
say?... Nothing??

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Did he make a sound, did he exhale?...  
He rolled his eyes? Foothill is not  
that far away, he needs to see me in  
this, it could get me a lot of work...  
Have you heard of anything juicy out  
there?... Mmhmm... Mmmhmm...

(and then he perks up)

That's that new one by what's his  
name out of Chicago... Oh, man, I  
would be perfect for that. Can you  
see if Alvin can get me an audi--  
no, wait, fuck him. Darlene, for  
two seconds, just two seconds, pretend  
to be my agent, call Westside Rep  
and see when they're auditioning and  
then say nice things about me.

Stu enters, hears the end of the call.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Drop a lot of credits -- *Cyrano!*...  
Thank you so much, Darlene, you're  
both charming and efficient. Let me  
know what they say, soon. Bye bye.

Stu can't resist:

STU

Talking to your agent?

ELLIOT

Uh, yeah. Do you have...?

STU

Oh, hell no. I don't need an agent.  
They hand me these parts on a platter.  
(then)  
Does your agent get you a lot of  
work?

ELLIOT

Three or four good auditions a year,  
for quality stuff. The rest is me  
hustling. My Saturday started with  
an audition I snagged at Bar Code  
Theatre in Hollywood, then I did a  
reading at noon for a writer in her  
living room in Studio City, and then  
I drove all the way out to Thousand  
Oaks for a 5 o'clock audition for  
their new Shakespeare company.

STU

... That 'platter' thing I just said,  
can I take it back?

ELLIOT

Sure, no problem.

They smile. Patti enters.

PATTI

I'm so sorry. My son skipped out on school today and was seen at the Santa Anita Racetrack.

(grabs her script)

Okay, where were we, where from?

The guys look at each other.

BOTH GUYS

'Doodling'?

They smile again, a nice connection. Then LIGHTS SHIFT, Elliot grabs a different script and Stu exits. At the back of the audience holding a script is ROBINSON, late 20's/early 30's, a hotshot director. He's played by the actor who plays Newton. Elliot is doing a scene with him.

ELLIOT

'Margaret, this is going to be the most difficult thing you've ever done. It makes childbirth look like brushing your teeth.'

ROBINSON

'Don't under estimate me, Ziegler.'

ELLIOT

'Don't under estimate the job, Margaret.'

ROBINSON

'Can you make me a winner?'

ELLIOT

'How badly do you want to win?'

ROBINSON

'My husband was killed by a nut case who fell through the cracks after the Gulf War. There should be no more cracks. Everyone one needs to be taken care of.'

ELLIOT

'Your husband's death will pull you dead even -- pun intended -- with Wilson. The rest, it's you grinding it out vote by vote and me finding any kind of mud we can sling at him.'

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(a beat)

'If that little speech hurt your precious feelings, get out of the race now. Go back to local politics. The national stage isn't about issues. It's about grandstanding, it's about ego, it's about working the corners of truth and lies so no one knows which is which, and if you're lucky, if you're LUCKY, Margaret, it's about making a difference in people's lives in the five minutes between this campaign and when you run for re-election.'

The scene's done and Robinson is cagey and hard-to-read.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

... Anything else you'd like to see?

ROBINSON

No.

He looks over Elliot's resume for an eternity.

ELLIOT

I can do that Carol Burnett song, "I Made a Fool of Myself Over John Foster Dulles" if you want to see something else political.

Robinson stares at him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

It was a joke.

Robinson goes back to the resume.

ROBINSON

*General Hospital?*

ELLIOT

It's not Chekhov but I learned eight pages of dialogue a day.

ROBINSON

Quantum.

ELLIOT

I did *The Shadow Box* last year at 18th Street and included the reviews there for you...

ROBINSON

Mmm, 18th Street, Natalie-the-lighting-designer.



ELLIOT  
I don't remember her...

ROBINSON  
Bikini top and combat boots.

ELLIOT  
Did you see combat duty?

Rob actually smiles at that.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
Well, thank you for seeing me, Rob.  
When will...?

ROBINSON  
Not long.

ELLIOT  
Great. You have my numbers, and ah,  
congratulations on founding such a  
wonderful theatre. You guys have  
really made your mark in a short  
time.

ROBINSON  
Relax, Elliot. No need to fog up my  
contacts.

ELLIOT  
Got it.

Robinson nods and curtly exits out the back of the house.

LIGHTS SHIFT, Magnus enters with after-dinner coffee drinks,  
goes to the cafe table, Elliot joins him.

MAGNUS  
When will you know?

ELLIOT  
Couple of days, I guess.

MAGNUS  
And what's this one called?

ELLIOT  
*Running.* It's about politics.

MAGNUS  
Which do you prefer?

ELLIOT  
They're both good parts, but two  
different animals...

MAGNUS

And?

ELLIOT

Westside Rep has an amazing reputation. They've won awards, critics come. My agent would come.

MAGNUS

Then it's an easy decision, isn't it?

ELLIOT

Yes. If they cast me.

MAGNUS

You'll get in. You have this energy about you.

Were sexier words ever spoken?

ELLIOT

Thank you.  
(then)  
How's your mocha?

MAGNUS

Okay. I like shaved chocolate on top but they don't do that here.

ELLIOT

We should've gone somewhere else.

MAGNUS

Next time. I know a place.

ELLIOT

(sings seductively)  
'I know a dark secluded place  
A place where no one knows your face'  
(then)  
'Hernando's Hideaway' from *The Pajama Game*.

MAGNUS

Wonderful! Can you do more?

ELLIOT

(gestures to his drink)  
One more of these and I can do the whole score dancing on the ceiling.

Magnus laughs.

MAGNUS

So this Westside Rep, is it legit?  
Or community?

ELLIOT

Neither. Equity waver. The 99 seat plan that doesn't pay diddly do.

MAGNUS

Ah.

ELLIOT

But the founding director works in film, he was at Sundance two years ago. Wouldn't I love to get some of that action.

MAGNUS

(seductively)

Action sounds good.

ELLIOT

Doesn't it? What do you do for action?

MAGNUS

Mmmmmmmmm, I cook delicious gourmet meals for my friends... I throw a blanket and some food in the car and just see where the day takes me... What do you do?

ELLIOT

Ohhh, I go to the theatre and movies and watch TV to stay current.

MAGNUS

That's great. I'm constantly reading financial journals.

ELLIOT

Better you than me. I hear 'large cap' and think 'Shriner's fez.'

They laugh.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(then)

What's your favorite TV show?

MAGNUS

Ahhh... I don't actually own a TV.

ELLIOT

No!

MAGNUS

Yes!

ELLIOT

And you're from what planet?

They laugh.

MAGNUS  
So what's your favorite TV show?

ELLIOT  
Oh, too many to mention. For the moment, let me go with *I Love Lucy*.

MAGNUS  
Great.

ELLIOT  
Have you ever seen *I Love..?*

Magnus shakes his head no, sheepishly.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
Waiter, gun please.

They laugh.

MAGNUS  
Elliot, you're so delightful. It feels good to laugh again. My ex was pretty stiff --

ELLIOT  
-- That could be a good thing.

They laugh.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
And on that note... what's your most romantic moment?

MAGNUS  
Ahhhhhhh, skinny dipping at Rimrock Lake with my college boyfriend.

ELLIOT  
Most embarrassing moment?

MAGNUS  
Skinny dipping at Rimrock Lake. A huge family showed up for a late afternoon picnic.

ELLIOT  
What did you do?

MAGNUS  
Walked out of the lake casually discussing how to pan fry trout as if we were walking out of the grocery store.

Elliot laughs.

ELLIOT  
Okay, meanest thing you've ever done.

MAGNUS  
What is it with the questions?

ELLIOT  
I'm getting to know you.

MAGNUS  
No, you're going through a checklist.  
When is it my turn?

ELLIOT  
Whenever you want.

MAGNUS  
Okay.  
(then)  
... What did you learn about yourself  
from your last relationship?

Whoa, didn't see that one coming. Elliot grapples.

ELLIOT  
Uhhhh... Contestants must be present  
to win.

MAGNUS  
Why did you last relationship end?

ELLIOT  
The ashtrays were full so we had to  
trade it in.

MAGNUS  
What do you hope to get out of your  
next relationship?

ELLIOT  
A George Foreman Grill.

MAGNUS  
Are you capable of giving a straight  
answer?

ELLIOT  
Not without a sex change operation.

Magnus laughs.

MAGNUS  
Okay, major points for entertainment  
value.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

(then)

What did you learn about yourself  
from your last relationship?

MAGNUS

... Life is too short to hold out  
for perfection.

ELLIOT

Why did your last relationship end?

MAGNUS

I got the job offer here in L.A.

ELLIOT

Why wouldn't he move down here with  
you?

MAGNUS

His job was more important to him  
than... This job was more important  
to me than...

Silence, then:

ELLIOT

What do you hope to get out of your  
next relationship?

MAGNUS

... Unconditional love. And to give  
it.

Ooo, deep water. Elliot can't look at him.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

I didn't say it had to be perfect.

Elliot nods. A few more beats.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

More questions or ready to call it a  
night?

Elliot doesn't answer. Magnus looks at his watch.

ELLIOT

Another engagement?

MAGNUS

Maybe. I told them I'd meet them  
only if I had time.

ELLIOT

Do you have time?

MAGNUS

If you'll let me in, I'll stay here.  
If not, I'll go meet my friends.

ELLIOT

This is me.

MAGNUS

That's fine. I'm not judging you.

Elliot still seems uncomfortable. Finally, kindly:

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

Call if you'd like to reveal more.  
Bye.

He exits.

Patti enters, along with Stu, Newton and LUANN.

PATTI

Marvin, meet your wife Muriel, played  
by the lovely LuAnn Livermore!

Elliot snaps out of his thoughts and joins the gang. LuAnn,  
40's, is lovely... as well as methodical and meticulous.  
She even irons her sheets and pillowcases.

LUANN

So nice to meet you! I saw you in  
*Ant Gorillas III*.

ELLIOT

So you're the one.

They all laugh.

LUANN

I brought you a little "Welcome to  
Foothill" gift -- my apple crumb  
cake.

She hands it to him. It's huge.

ELLIOT

Thank you so much.

LUANN

I may have put in a teensy too much  
cinnamon.

STU

Oh, LuAnn...

PATTI

She does this every time.

LUANN  
I can tell the difference!

STU  
Only you.

ELLIOT  
I'm sure it's great. I'll try it at  
break.  
(to Patti)  
Ready to start?

PATTI  
You bet.  
(to LuAnn)  
He's keeping me on my toes.  
(then)  
Okay, page 12! Marvin and Herb are  
in the ALCOVE -- Newton --

Newton briskly shows the guys.

NEWTON  
Alcove.

PATTI  
And Muriel's entering the front door --

NEWTON  
Front door.

He shows LuAnn.

PATTI  
And she's in the birthday party  
spirit!

LUANN  
Patti, how giddy do you want me?

PATTI  
Don't knock over the furniture, but  
other than that, go for it.

LUANN  
I was thinking I could twirl when I  
come in.

PATTI  
Sounds great.

Patti suddenly holds her script to her forehead.

PATTI (CONT'D)  
Yellow. LuAnn, Muriel's got her  
emotional center wide open.



LuAnn's not completely sure how to translate that, but smiles gamely.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Begin.

ELLIOT

'The blade can't be exposed, Herb,  
it'll harden if it's not used a lot.  
Maybe we should make it retract all  
the way.'

STU

'Then the housing needs to be even  
deeper...'

LuAnn-as-Muriel twirls in the door. It's a big twirl.

LUANN

'I'm h-o-o-o-o-m-e!!!'

ELLIOT

'Hi, honey, how'd it go at the beauty  
shop?'

LUANN

(to Patti)

Too big?

PATTI

A smidge. But the energy was GREAT!

LUANN

Can we do it again?

PATTI

Of course.

LuAnn gets into place. And then adjusts her stance. It's like watching a high diver getting her toes just right on the edge of the diving board.

ELLIOT

'The blade can't be exposed, Herb,  
it'll --'

LuAnn's still fiddling with her position. He waits until she's done.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'The blade can't be exposed, Herb,  
it'll harden if --'

LUANN

Patti, maybe a skip would be better.

PATTI

Give it a shot.

Elliot waits til LuAnn's ready.

ELLIOT

'The blade can't be exposed, Herb,  
it'll harden if it's not used a lot.  
Maybe we should make it retract all  
the way.'

STU

'Then the housing needs to be even  
deeper...'

LuAnn-as-Muriel skips in.

LUANN

'I'm h-o-o-o-o-m-e!!'

(then)

I hated that. I'm twirling.

PATTI

Great. Go for it.

LuAnn gets into place again. More fine tuning of the feet  
position. Elliot waits... Finally:

ELLIOT

'The blade can't be exposed, Herb,  
it'll harden if it's not used a lot.  
Maybe we should make it retract all  
the way.'

STU

'Then the housing needs to be even  
deeper...'

LUANN

'I'm h-o-o-o-o-m-e!!'

LuAnn twirls in but Patti's CELL PHONE RINGS and, startled,  
LuAnn falls.

LUANN (CONT'D)

Ah!!

Everyone rushes to help LuAnn up.

NEWTON

Don't move! I'll get an accident  
report!

LUANN

I'm so sorry! I'm fine, really!

PATTI  
(grabs phone)  
Now what?

NEWTON  
I'm still getting an accident report.

LUANN  
I felt like I was getting it!

STU  
You were, you were!

PATTI  
(on phone)  
Of course a bong is not an acceptable  
art project, what did you THINK they  
would say, Curtis?!

She exits off stage.

LUANN  
I'm sorry, I'm sorry, this is all my  
fault.

STU  
Curtis making a bong?

Elliot, Stu and LuAnn laugh.

PATTI  
(off)  
NO YOU CAN'T ENTER IT IN THE SCIENCE  
FAIR, EITHER.

LUANN  
(whispers)  
I think he has a D-R-U-G problem.

ELLIOT  
... Uh, while we're waiting...  
(makes sure Patti's  
out of earshot)  
... May I offer an insight? If that's  
not overstepping?

LUANN  
Please do!

She listens intently.

ELLIOT  
You have six weeks of rehearsal to  
get this right. It doesn't have to  
be perfect tonight.

LUANN  
(this had not occurred  
to her)

Oh.

ELLIOT  
Don't be so hard on yourself. Relax.  
Have fun.

LUANN  
Okay.

A beat.

ELLIOT  
... That's... that's it.

LUANN  
Thank you so much!

ELLIOT  
Sure. Any time.

PATTI  
(off)  
Hang-gliding?! No, suspension does  
not mean 'vacation.'

ELLIOT  
... Since we have a few moments...  
why don't we do the first few lines  
again, only this time, don't stop,  
just keep going, we can fix it later.

NEWTON  
The accident report?

ELLIOT  
LuAnn?

LUANN  
I'm fine. Really.

NEWTON  
(pissed; then:)  
Should I write down this blocking?

ELLIOT  
No.

LUANN  
What if I forget it??

ELLIOT  
I'll remember it. Places.

They get into place. LuAnn starts to fuss with her take-off position, then throws her hands up, "Oh, what the hell!" Elliot nods, "That's the spirit!" The scene runs like clockwork, and LuAnn does not twirl.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'The blade can't be exposed, Herb, it'll harden if it's not used a lot. Maybe we should make it retract all the way.'

STU

'Then the housing needs to be even deeper...'

LUANN

'I'm h-o-o-o-o-m-e!!'

ELLIOT

'Hi, honey, how'd it go at the beauty shop?'

LUANN

'I got the most amazing ideas talking to Betty about my birthday party! We drew up the guest list, the menu, the party favors, the decorations, now all I need is for SOMEONE to pull it all together on the 19th!'

ELLIOT

(the date rings a bell)

'The 19th...'

STU

'The 19th.'

ELLIOT

'But your birthday is on the 21st, Muriel.'

LUANN

'The 21st is a MONDAY -- we're not having a big blowout on a MONDAY.'

ELLIOT

'Then the 19th it is.'

Stu-as-Herb mouths "The pitch is on the 19th!"

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'The pitch is on...'

LuAnn-as-Muriel looks at him funny.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'The pitcher is on the mound, here's the fastball!'

(kisses "Muriel," she giggles)

LuAnn, when I cross here, Stu can cross over there...

Patti enters.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

... Then you cross here and that way you won't see him mouth that line but you'll see me -- oh, hi, Patti.

She looks a little testy.

PATTI

Couldn't wait?

ELLIOT

Just... 'moving it around.' Newton wasn't even writing it down, right, Newton?

Newton will neither confirm nor deny the allegation.

PATTI

I was gone for 30 seconds.

ELLIOT

Of course. I'm sorry. Sometimes improvising is a good way to --

PATTI

-- Would you like to take over?

ELLIOT

No. I'm sorry.

PATTI

Because I have plenty of other things I could be doing.

ELLIOT

I'm sorry.

PATTI

My son was just suspended for three days because of his 'art' project. Now I have to worry about what he'll be doing when he's off from school -- why in the world do they think suspension is a good idea?!

A beat. No one has an answer to that one. And then Elliot's CELL PHONE RINGS. Crap, what to do?

ELLIOT

Uh, sorry, I forgot to turn it off...

He grabs it... but looks at the caller I.D. and decides to quickly take it.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Hello?... Yes... Yes... Ah, okay...  
um, great, thank you SO much... ah,  
I'm in the middle of a rehearsal,  
may I call you back later tonight or  
tomorrow morning?.. Thank you.

He hangs up. They all stare at him. What was that about?  
He doesn't tip his hand.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Where from?

PATTI

'... I'm h-o-o-o-m-e.'

A beat. The actors all exit, except Elliot, who goes to  
meet Allison at the cafe. She's wearing sweats, it's late  
at night, after the rehearsal.

ALLISON

Now what the hell are you gonna do?

ELLIOT

I don't know.

ALLISON

How small is the part?

ELLIOT

Thirty-two lines.

ALLISON

You COUNTED?

He looks sheepish.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Why did they give you the henchman  
instead of the campaign manager?

ELLIOT

They wanted a 'name' for the lead --  
Desmond Whiteleather.

ALLISON

With a name like that you'd think  
I'd have heard of him.

ELLIOT

He's big in theatre back east and he's worked with this director before. If I'd known he had it sewn up, I never would've tried out.

ALLISON

But you got seen by this hot shot director and you got cast.

ELLIOT

But is it worth it making 13 dollars a performance to work with these guys?

ALLISON

Well, you make a good impression, you could end up in their next big thing. I know you were counting on the money from Foothill, though... How's it going at over at Foothill?

ELLIOT

The director's terrible. Patti Pimplehead puts more thought into her grocery list.

ALLISON

What about the other actors?

ELLIOT

They're okay, stumbling along without anyone to guide them.

ALLISON

Will your agent come out to see it?

ELLIOT

I keep leaving messages, he keeps ignoring them. You do the math. And then Patti keeps taking phone calls, and the stage manager is a ticking time bomb, and the woman playing my wife has this perfection streak a mile wi--

Allison is staring. He's doing his Fatalism Thing.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Could you just be my friend and not my Life Coach?

ALLISON

Someone has to hold you accountable.  
(sweetly)  
How are things with you and Magnus?



ELLIOT

Okay.

Long silence. Finally:

ALLISON

What?

ELLIOT

He has a lot of money.

ALLISON

So do I.

ELLIOT

You don't hold my roller coaster bank account against me.

ALLISON

Maybe he won't, either. What else?

ELLIOT

He never watches TV or movies so I'll never be able to have a conversation with him.

ALLISON

I've had plenty of conversations with him! Good ones!

ELLIOT

Allison, you read the *Wall Street Journal* and watch *Frontline*! I'm eating Trader Joe's heat 'n serve lasagne and watching *Laverne and Shirley* reruns!

ALLISON

Jesus Christ, get to know him! This is so you! Picking something apart before you're out of the gate. I don't know which part or which boyfriend is right, but go with something and stick with it!

She gets up and exits. Elliot hangs his head, wondering what to do next. After a few moments, Stu enters.

STU

'...It'll be all right.'

ELLIOT

'I totally messed up, didn't I?'

STU

'No. I have a plan.'

ELLIOT

'Oh boy...'

STU

'Hear me out.'

Patti enters, but she's distracted, texting on her cell phone.  
Newton enters as well, keeping an eye on the blocking.

STU (CONT'D)

'You do both the pitch and Muriel's birthday party on the 19th. Start the party at four. Have Callahan come at six -- there'll be 30 people here by then -- Muriel will never see him. You bring him to the side yard, do the demo, I'll keep Muriel inside with the Mai Tais, and Callahan will be gone before she's the wiser.'

ELLIOT

'When I blew out the back of the garage last year, she didn't speak to me for two weeks. When I lost all that money five years ago on the auto hedge trimmer -- that was her new car, Herb. If she finds out, she'll kill me.'

STU

'She won't. That's my job. That's why it's gonna work'

A beat. The scene's over. Patti looks up.

PATTI

Good job, guys.

She turns to Newton.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Do we have the window washer device yet?

NEWTON

(proudly)

Actually, I'm going to build it myself. But I need to know how large to make it...

Newton and Patti continue to talk off to the side.

PATTI

If it's too small, it won't 'read' to the audience...

He gets out some diagrams to show her.

NEWTON

I've taken the liberty of doing up some specs...

Meanwhile:

ELLIOT

Good work, Stu.

STU

Thank you.

ELLIOT

I mean it. You were right there, a hundred percent.

STU

Thank you.

ELLIOT

How do you do it, without any training?

STU

I don't know. I think sometimes it's because I don't have anything riding on it. I have a buddy who wanted to play professional golf. The minute he turned pro, his swing went to hell in a hand basket.

Both guys do a golf swing and then they both do the opening notes from the old Johnny Carson "Tonight Show" theme -- and crack themselves up.

ELLIOT

Guess what I got for my birthday last summer.

STU

What?

ELLIOT

The boxed set of Johnny Carson's favorite moments from his show -- 1962 to 1992.

STU

Omigod, I'll bet that's a blast.

ELLIOT

I'll loan it to you.

STU

(his best Ed McMahon)  
Hi-Yo!!!!

They laugh.

ELLIOT  
How about I throw in *I Love Lucy*?

STU  
Get outa here!

ELLIOT  
Every episode.

STU  
I've died and gone to heaven.  
(from Vitameatavegamin)  
'Do you pop out at parties? Are you  
unpopular...'

ELLIOT  
'It's so tasty, too. Just like  
candy!'

They crack themselves up again.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
(then)  
You know... my agent can be a little  
flaky, but he's good at repping  
'character actors.' I was thinking  
of mentioning you to him. If you  
want.

STU  
Oh, gosh, Elliot, that's awfully  
nice, but I don't --

Patti gets loud and Stu clams up.

PATTI  
-- I think it should be five feet  
across.

NEWTON  
This isn't a device for living room  
windows, it's for bedroom windows.

PATTI  
This play isn't grounded in strict  
science, Newton.

NEWTON  
Well, it's grounded in suburban  
reality, and I was trying to --

PATTI  
-- Do you ever turn off the Science  
Channel in your head?

NEWTON

No.

PATTI

We'll discuss it later.

She turns back to Elliot and Stu.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Good work, guys. You know, I was thinking, Stu, could you punch it up more? Give me more of an Ed Norton read, kinda big and over the top.

STU

... Okay.

Elliot isn't pleased.

PATTI

Yes, Mr. Gielgud?

Elliot carefully wades in.

ELLIOT

... This is one of the few scenes in the play when the audience has a chance to catch their breath and more importantly, to feel the realness of this dilemma. It's in contrast to all the insanity before and after.

PATTI

... If you don't like my directing, why don't you just say so?

ELLIOT

... This is a collaborative art, Patti, I'm not staging a coup, I'm trying to work together.

PATTI

It feels passive aggressive. Mr. Upbeat, Mr. Professional, and then the little knife stabs.

ELLIOT

These aren't knife stabs, they're suggestions.

PATTI

And my direction to Stu was a suggestion, don't we get to see it the way I want it?

Patti's CELL PHONE RINGS, she answers it.

PATTI (CONT'D)  
Christ-on-a-crumb-heap, now what?!

Elliot, furious, grabs his own cell phone and a piece of paper with a phone number on it as Patti goes off stage.

ELLIOT  
Hi, Rob, this is Elliot Park... I'm sorry it took me awhile, but is the role of Teddy still available?...  
(disappointed)  
Oh.  
(then good news)  
Oh.  
(then details)  
He dropped out already -- wow, I don't know why someone would do that, you guys have such a track record...  
(more details)  
A better part, well, that happens.  
(quickly)  
Uh, when's the read-through?... Great, really looking forward to it.

He hangs up. His eyes meet Stu's.

STU  
... A read-through?

ELLIOT  
Yeah.

STU  
Movie?

ELLIOT  
Another play.

STU  
Where?

ELLIOT  
West Side Rep.

STU  
Wow.  
(then)  
... Will you be able to do both?

ELLIOT  
(shakes his head no)  
I'm sorry.

Stu nods that he gets it. As the LIGHTS SHIFT, Newton exits and then Stu exits; Elliot looks after him sadly. Then he finally walks to the apron of the stage, now alone. He looks around. He's at the new space now -- drinking it in.

He tries out one of his speeches.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'You're not gonna hold it against me are you? My job was on the line and Margaret wanted the truth. I wasn't trying to knife you in the back, I was just looking out for myself.'

(a different take,  
angrier, defensive)

'You're not gonna hold it against me are you? My job was on the line and Margaret wanted the truth. I wasn't trying to knife you in the back, I was just looking out for myself.'

Robinson, the director, enters.

ROBINSON

Aren't we all?

ELLIOT

Rob -- hi!

Robinson smiles devilishly... and goes about unpacking his satchel. Elliot fidgets, wanting to chat. Finally:

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Do you like politics?

ROBINSON

No.

ELLIOT

Oh. Then, uh, what made you decide to direct *Running*?

ROBINSON

Unmitigated ambition.

ELLIOT

... Yours or the characters'?

ROBINSON

We'll find out, won't we?

O-kay then. Elliot stands there adrift. Finally stage manager BARBARA ANN enters, played by the actress who is playing Patti. Barbara Ann is efficiency personified... and is completely devoid of a sense of humor.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)

After the read-through, I want to work the first two scenes of Act I.

BARBARA ANN

Got it. Fiona's running a little late.

ROBINSON

I wouldn't have expected anything less.

Elliot chuckles at the joke, neither of the other two laugh. Awkward pause, then:

ELLIOT

... Hi, Barbara... Stage manager?

BARBARA ANN

Barbara Ann.

ELLIOT

... Would it be better if I didn't sing the Beach Boys' song?

She gives him a withering look.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Yep. Paper work?

BARBARA ANN

In a sec.

She begins to set up for the read-through, arranging chairs. Elliot has to move out of her way more than once.

ELLIOT

Sorry...  
(then)  
Oops... ha ha!  
(then)  
Whoa...

Then he anticipates her move and gets out of the way first.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Beat ya!

She still doesn't crack a smile. He sighs. Adrift.

Then fortunately DESMOND WHITELEATHER enters. Desmond is a hale-fellow well-met sort, with a very polished sheen. He's played by the actor who plays Stu.

DESMOND

Rob!

ROBINSON

Desmond.

They do a quick back slap.



DESMOND

Did you ride those monster waves  
last weekend?

ROBINSON

You know it.

DESMOND

I'd never seen anything like it.

ROBINSON

Third week of July 2009. Lifeguards  
pulled everyone out of the water.  
We just went further up the coast.

DESMOND

Nice.  
(cheerfully)  
Who's this?

ELLIOT

Elliot Park. I play Teddy.

DESMOND

My henchman who undermines me!

ELLIOT

That's me!

They shake hands.

DESMOND

Great to be working with you.

ELLIOT

It's an honor to be working with you.  
The creme de la cream. I'm in hog  
heaven. I just mixed metaphors.

Elliot and Desmond laugh.

DESMOND

*The New Yorker* used to have this  
feature --

BOTH GUYS

'Block that Metaphor!'

They laugh, bonding.

DESMOND

God, a million years ago, we used to  
do Sunday brunches and over mimosas,  
we'd take turns reading from bad  
scripts, bad novels -- overheated  
metaphors and wooden dialogue galore.

ELLIOT  
Sounds like a blast.

DESMOND  
I should start that up again.

ELLIOT  
That would be --

Desmond's CELL PHONE RINGS.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
-- Great.

DESMOND  
(on the call)  
Derrick my man!

And then FIONA PATRICK enters. She's played by the actress who plays LuAnn. Confidence in spades. Or so it appears.

FIONA  
I'm not late, I'm not late!  
(then)  
Am I?

ROBINSON  
Yes.

FIONA  
Liar.

They kiss... and it's more than just a business kiss.

FIONA (CONT'D)  
Mm, don't you look sexy in that shirt?

ROBINSON  
That's why you bought it, isn't it?

FIONA  
That and you needed to stop dressing like a Cal Tech student.

ROBINSON  
If only my actors took direction as well as I do.

FIONA  
Oh, stop.  
(to Elliot)  
And you are?

ELLIOT  
Elliot Park. I play Teddy.

FIONA  
Nice to meet you.

ELLIOT  
I loved you in *Rogue's Gallery*.

FIONA  
Thank you.

Des is off the phone by now.

ELLIOT  
My favorite scene was in the courtroom  
when you told your lawyer --

FIONA  
(over him, on to  
Desmond)  
Des, have you seen the monologues in  
this? I'm taping crib notes around  
the stage.

DESMOND  
You do this every time.  
(high voice, ala Fiona)  
I'm so lost, I can't do this!  
(his voice)  
And then she wins some Goddamn award.

FIONA  
Oh, you.  
(to Des)  
I saw your fancy schmancy interview  
in the *L.A. Times*.

DESMOND  
Voice-over actors! All the things I  
do, and they put me in a profile of  
voice-over actors! And this TINY  
picture of me! I could've been  
Orville Fuckin' Wright for all anyone --

FIONA  
-- Hey, it's free publicity. And  
speaking of which, Robbie, are we  
going to have a publicist for this  
show? Westside needs to act like a  
real theater and hire one.

ROBINSON  
I brought it up to the board, Fiona,  
they're actually interviewing  
candidates.

FIONA  
I have a couple of names to give  
you.

Fiona and Rob discuss as...

ELLIOT

How did you get into voice-over?

DESMOND

I met this GREAT commercial agent, we have the same chiropractor. In fact that was him on phone -- my agent, not the -- and I just booked another one. They think I can do a Charlie-the-Tuna kind of voice, only it's for canned salmon!

ELLIOT

Let me know if Sammy the Salmon needs a sidekick, I'm available. Ralph the Red Snapper.

DESMOND

(laughs)

That'd be great! I love this guy!

Elliot's beaming.

ELLIOT

Hey, is you agent coming to the run of *Running*?

DESMOND

No, he hates theatre.

(laughs)

But my theatrical agent will be. Ooo, I gotta call her -- Lexi Caprisi -- with a name like that, shouldn't she be selling Italian timeshares or acting in porn?

They both laugh.

DESMOND (CONT'D)

I'm waiting to hear about this GREAT part in --

(looks over at Rob,  
lowers his voice)

-- this AMAZING sci fi film -- it's shooting in Bangkok in July.

ELLIOT

Why are we whispering?

DESMOND

Because it overlaps with the end of *Running*. I'd be playing a Dr. Mengele type. Experiments! Tools of torture! Mmwah-ah-ahhh!

ELLIOT  
(Peter Lorre voice)  
Excellent, master, excellent!

DESMOND  
Peter Lorre! I love Peter Lorre!

ELLIOT  
(normal voice)  
Me, too. So how are you going to  
finesse...

BARBARA ANN  
Here ya go.

The guys jump in surprise.

BARBARA ANN (CONT'D)  
Sorry to interrupt. It's your  
paperwork.

ELLIOT  
Great, do you want it in black ink?

BARBARA ANN  
Write it in blood for all I care,  
just press hard.

ROBINSON  
(to Barbara Ann)  
Where are we?

BARBARA ANN  
Election research and articles?

ROBINSON  
Hand 'em out.

ELLIOT  
Research, I love research. I was  
reading up on the Illinois Senate  
election the play is based on. Boy  
oh boy, it doesn't get any messier  
than that!

Barbara Ann hands out articles -- Fiona cuts right in front  
of Elliot to get hers.

FIONA  
(looking over the  
handouts)  
Oh, yes, the piece from the *Chicago  
Tribune*, I was already reading it --

ELLIOT  
-- Me, too!  
(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Did you get to the part about how  
her opponent pushed his secretary  
down the st--

FIONA

-- Barbara Ann, I need a time-line,  
the events of the play -- before the  
curtain goes up and during the stage  
time.

Barbara Ann just stares at her.

ELLIOT

... I've already done a time-line,  
would you like to borrow mine?

ROBINSON

I'll do one with you, Fiona, there's  
a lot of back story to lay in.

DESMOND

In TV they call it laying pipe.

FIONA

Oh, stop.

Fiona swats at him.

ELLIOT

(to Rob)

Ah, after the read-through today,  
even though I'm not in the first two  
scenes, I hope it's okay for me to  
stay and watch you guys work...

Fiona gives Robinson a look.

ROBINSON

Not today. Maybe another time.

Elliot's disappointed.

FIONA

Barbara Ann, who's doing costumes?

BARBARA ANN

Katarina.

FIONA

Oh, God, shoot me now. Rob, this  
isn't a punk rock opera set in Berlin.

BARBARA ANN

She's already started her designs.

ROBINSON

Things are under control, my dear,  
we met last week...

Fiona, Barbara Ann and Rob huddle.

ELLIOT

(to Des)

So how are you going to finesse doing  
the end of our run, if you're shooting  
in Bangkok?

DESMOND

You know what, Elliot? Not my  
problem. I'll be in the show long  
enough to get good reviews for the  
team, and then I'm sure there are  
any number of actors in town who can  
take over the final two weekends,  
which believe me, will already be  
sold out, so the Rep won't be hurting.  
Besides, this happens all the time  
in the 99 seat world, am I right?

ELLIOT

You're right.

DESMOND

The guy who had your part left for a  
primo lawyer show on TV. There ya  
go.

ELLIOT

There ya go. When will you know  
about Bangkok?

DESMOND

Any minute.

FIONA

I can name a half a dozen other  
costumers who would be more suited  
to this job. You say the word and  
I'm on the phone.

ROBINSON

Katarina did *Glengarry Glenross* for  
me here and she was just fine.

FIONA

That was all men! In suits!

ROBINSON

Fiona, relax, she'll have you looking  
like a million bucks.

FIONA

She damn well better, or I'm taking  
that new shirt of yours.

ROBINSON

You'll have to rip it off me.

FIONA

I could do that.

Desmond's CELL PHONE RINGS, he answers it.

DESMOND

Lexi my sweet! What's the word?

ELLIOT

(sotto)

Let it be 'Bangkok.'

LIGHTS SHIFT, actors exit, MUSIC that evokes Bangkok is  
heard... and then LIGHT SHIFT to bright sunshine. Magnus  
and Elliot carefully enter so they are eventually staring up  
from audience level to the stage.

\*  
\*  
\*  
\*

MAGNUS

That's it up there, the green trim  
and the tile roof.

ELLIOT

Are you sure this is okay?

MAGNUS

Of course it is.

ELLIOT

Haven't we just defeated the purpose  
of having a gated community?

MAGNUS

I wanted to get a sneak peak while  
the owners are out of town, and my  
friend James told me how to find  
this path off Pacific Coast Highway --  
that's an open invitation as far as  
I'm concerned. Watch your step...

Magnus carefully hops up onto the stage. Elliot, scared  
shitless, follows.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

WOW! LOOK AT THAT OCEAN! WHAT A  
VIEW!

Elliot doesn't look around.

ELLIOT

Uh huh.



MAGNUS

No, no, Elliot, you have to see this!

Magnus grabs him and spins him around to face the audience.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

You can see for ten thousand miles!

ELLIOT

At least!

Elliot dives for the floor.

MAGNUS

Are you afraid of heights?

ELLIOT

... A little.

MAGNUS  
Why didn't you say something?

ELLIOT  
I wanted you to like me!

Magnus laughs and Elliot laughs, too.

MAGNUS  
Okay, let's get up on the deck and  
closer to the house.

ELLIOT  
Thank God.

Magnus goes upstage a few feet, Elliot literally crawls to  
join him. Magnus peers in the "house."

MAGNUS  
Fabulous living room, huge kitchen...

ELLIOT  
(peeking in)  
Hardwood floors, grand staircase  
upstairs...

Magnus turns around and faces the ocean / audience.

MAGNUS  
And then there's the view.  
(then)  
This is one of the things you promised  
you'd show me -- sunsets in Malibu.

ELLIOT  
But not from a 200 foot cliff!

Magnus laughs.

MAGNUS  
It does add a little something,  
doesn't it.

ELLIOT  
Your friend said the place is for  
sale?

MAGNUS  
He's pretty sure it will be. The  
owners are talking about moving when  
they retire next year.

ELLIOT  
Can you afford it, if that's not too  
forward a question.

MAGNUS

My last house in Seattle did me very well.

ELLIOT

I'm still hoping for a first house.

MAGNUS

... Stand up.

ELLIOT

Huh?

MAGNUS

Literally. I'll hold your hand.

Magnus takes his hand and practically hoists Elliot to his feet.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

Face out. Face the world. Now dream big. What do you see?

ELLIOT

... I can't look.

MAGNUS

Then close your eyes. Now what do you see?

ELLIOT

You. Flying. Over this cliff.

MAGNUS

And where are you?

ELLIOT

I'm in the garage eating Cheese Nips, where it's safe.

MAGNUS

No, you're not. You had the courage to call me again and ask me out. You're right here.

ELLIOT

... Okay, I'm right here.

MAGNUS

Where are you in a month?

ELLIOT

... The opening night of *Running*...

MAGNUS

How's it going?

ELLIOT

... Wonderfully. The critics are there. We're getting great reviews.  
(then)  
You're there.

MAGNUS

Good. And then what?

ELLIOT

... We're at a hotel room near the beach after opening night -- ground level --

Magnus laughs.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

And we have a bottle of champagne. And we can see the waves, lit by moonlight...

MAGNUS

I love it.

Elliot opens his eyes.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

That wasn't hard, was it?

Elliot shakes his head no. They smile. They kiss. LIGHTS SHIFT. Magnus exits as...

Fiona enters and Elliot joins her, back at West Side Rep. Barbara Ann joins them at her stage manager post. Robinson is at the back of the house watching.

FIONA

'What the hell am I gonna do, Teddy?'

ELLIOT

'Trust the process.'

FIONA

'Process?? It's a blender set on puree and he's pulled the lid off. I'm ready to throw HIM in the blender and hit pulverize.'

ELLIOT

'You want a choir boy for a campaign manager? A Boy Scout? Gandhi? Who, by the way, couldn't get you elected. Stick with Ziegler. He's got an amazing track record.'

FIONA

'... Why in the world did he pick me? Of all the campaigns he could've run.'

ELLIOT

'He knows a good bet when he sees one.'

FIONA

'I wasn't a good bet. I was a real long-shot. What did he see in me?'

ELLIOT

'Ask him.'

FIONA

'I have. He dances away.'  
(then)  
'... But you won't. You're the Boy Scout. Why did Ziegler pick me?'

ELLIOT

'It doesn't matter.'

FIONA

'The hell it doesn't.'

ROBINSON

Go after him.

FIONA

'The hell it doesn't.'

ELLIOT

'Margaret, you're running, that's all that matters --'

FIONA

'-- Why did he pick me, he could've run anyone's campaign.'

Elliot-as-Teddy looks away.

FIONA (CONT'D)

'What do you know, Teddy? Boy Scouts tell the truth. Tell me.'

ROBINSON

And Ziegler enters.

FIONA

If only. He's -- what, Barbara Ann -- an hour late??

BARBARA ANN

Hour fifteen.

ROBINSON

Maybe he went surfing and couldn't  
handle the waves.

They stare at him, appalled. Robinson shrugs, "It happens."

BARBARA ANN

Maybe he had car trouble.

FIONA

He could've called.

ELLIOT

Maybe he took another job.

They all look at him. Elliot: Oops.

BARBARA ANN

He didn't tell me about another job.

ELLIOT

Or his phone died. That happens.  
He got crazy busy, forgot to charge  
it...

FIONA

Do you know something?

ELLIOT

No, no, just spitballing.

ROBINSON

He did that to me once before, double-  
booked himself.

ELLIOT

Well, we don't know if he's double-  
booked.

(he can't resist)

When did he double-book?

ROBINSON

Couple of years ago. Two plays.  
The other was a one-night benefit  
thing. But still.

ELLIOT

That's terrible. What did you do?

ROBINSON

I went on in his place. It was  
awesome.

ELLIOT

Oh.

ROBINSON

Especially 'cause that night I met a  
guy in the audience who signed me to  
direct --

FIONA

(enough of the ego  
dance)

-- Robbie, how was our scene?

ROBINSON

Quantum. You guys are connecting.

FIONA

Well, crap, we should, we ran it six  
times. I really want to work on Act  
II, Scene 3, Des, where are you?!

ELLIOT

... If you want to run the lines,  
you know, just to warm up, I could  
play Ziegler. Happy to.

Fiona looks to Rob.

ROBINSON

Sure, I've got some calls to make.

He moves towards a wing, pulling out his phone as Elliot  
grabs his script and gets into place. He plays the scene  
with a lot less sarcasm and edge than Des would use. \*

FIONA

'I'm quitting.'

ELLIOT

'Well, Thomas Eagleton quit, but  
he'd had shock therapy. You're in  
much better shape, trust me.'

FIONA

'If I don't quit now I'll need shock  
therapy.'

ELLIOT

'Margaret, for Christ's sake, don't  
let every little bump in the road  
turn into a NASCAR pileup.'

FIONA

'You created a soap opera worthy of  
Mexican TV about Wilson pushing his  
secretary down the stairs -- he  
accidentally elbowed her in the middle  
of a dozen people.'

ELLIOT

'The secretary felt she was pushed  
and I went with that.'

Rob, being Rob, has been watching. He steps onstage.

ROBINSON

You're being too nice. You're not  
Teddy here. Do it again.

Elliot's a little rattled Rob was watching and when he gives  
it a go this time, his nerves get the better of him and  
Ziegler seems loopy and off-kilter. \*

FIONA

'I'm quitting.'



ELLIOT

'Well, Thomas Eagleton quit, but he'd had shock therapy. You're in much better shape, trust me.'

FIONA

'If I don't quit now, I'll need shock therapy.'

ELLIOT

'Margaret, for Christ's sake, don't let every little bump in the road turn into a NASCAR pileup.'

ROBINSON

Too goofy, you're bouncing around. You're her equal. Own the space.

\*

ELLIOT

... Well, technically they're not equals, Ziegler is the old pro and she's --

ROBINSON

Not Ziegler. You. You're Fiona's equal. Do it again.

\*

FIONA

'I'm quitting.'

Elliot plants his feet firmly and lets 're rip.

\*

ELLIOT

'Well, Thomas Eagleton quit, but he'd had shock therapy. You're in much better shape, trust me.'

FIONA

'If I don't quit now. I'll need shock therapy.'

ELLIOT

'Margaret, for Christ's sake, don't let every little bump in the road turn into a NASCAR -- puh, hi, Des.'

Everyone turns to look at Des, who was actually watching from the back of the house.

DESMOND

... Miss me?

ROBINSON

(unflappable)

Yes, we did. Where were you?

DESMOND

I had a commercial session in Burbank, and then my cell phone died and traffic was horrible on the 405 and then I couldn't find a pay phone on Wilshire -- have they stopped making them??

ROBINSON

What was the session?

DESMOND

Canned salmon. It's a national, big bucks, and I'm sorry, Robbie, but West Side Rep doesn't even cover my cost of gas.

ROBINSON

Understood. Okay, Act II, Scene 3, let's do it.

Desmond and Fiona get in to place, Elliot watches from the audience, no one seems to mind.

FIONA  
'I'm quitting.'

DESMOND  
'Thomas Eagleton quit, but he'd had  
shock therapy. You're in much better  
shape, trust me.'

Robinson's CELL PHONE RINGS.

ROBINSON  
Sorry, I forgot to turn it off.

He looks at the caller first, though.

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
Ooo, Katarina.

FIONA  
For the love a God, take it.

ROBINSON  
(on phone)  
How's it going, Kat?  
(to tease Fiona)  
Have you got Fiona's Ann-Margaret  
wig yet?

Fiona shoots him an evil look, then:

FIONA  
Barbara Ann, do you have Motrin?

BARBARA ANN

Do I look like a pharmacist?

FIONA

Never mind, I'll get it myself --  
I'll be at the drugstore across the  
street...

She exits. Des gets busy unpacking his bag... and can't  
really be bothered with Elliot.

ELLIOT

(to Des)

... How did the commercial go?

DESMOND

Great.

ELLIOT

Was it funny, like Charlie-the-Tuna?

DESMOND

Not really.

ELLIOT

Oh. I thought that was their angle.

DESMOND

It should've been.

ELLIOT

... I was just running lines with  
her.

DESMOND

Mm.

ELLIOT

... We'd done our scene six times.

DESMOND

I got here as fast as I could.

ELLIOT

Oh, I know. It was just a line-  
running thing out of despera--, okay,  
not desperation, we just needed  
something to do, well, not needed,  
she wanted, it was Fiona's idea...

Des ignores him.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

... Hey, I found a copy of an old  
script -- *Plan Nine From Outer Space* --  
have you ever seen it?

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

The absolute worst ever sci fi movie ever made. I thought it would make a great thing to read during Sunday brunch.

DESMOND

(finally looking at him)

Sunday brunch?

Amazingly, he seems to have no recall of their previous conversation.

ELLIOT

Uh, never mind.

LIGHTS SHIFT to evening. Des and Barbara Ann exit, Elliot is joined by Magnus. They stroll.

MAGNUS

You called the movie's production company?!

ELLIOT

I did. I pretended to be a travel agent trying to round up some business to Thailand.

MAGNUS

I love it! So when does he start?

ELLIOT

Most of the cast will be in Bangkok July 1st. Desmond is supposed to start July 23rd -- with two weeks left in our run.

MAGNUS

And when will he tell your director?

ELLIOT

That, my friend, is the \$64,000 question. Even if he doesn't tell Rob for awhile, it's okay. I just stay in Rob and Desmond's good graces til then, I'll have the part. I can't wait to start lining up some press to come when I take over the role.

MAGNUS

Brilliant!

(then)

Is it tailor-made for you like the other one?

ELLIOT  
(a small hesitation)  
... It's a great part.

MAGNUS  
Okay then.

ELLIOT  
Now all I have to do is stay sane in  
the mean time.

MAGNUS

Why's that?

ELLIOT

The egos and politics at West Side Rep make the play's politics look like an afternoon social with tea cakes. Fiona complains about literally everything, Rob lives in Ego World, Barbara Ann does her Supreme Martyr act every time you ask her for the time of day, and Desmond is Mr. Icy right now.

MAGNUS

Is theatre always like this? You said Foothill was a ship of fools.

ELLIOT

Well, that's community theatre.

MAGNUS

And this one's the 99 seat thing -- when do things get better? Broadway?

Elliot hears him. And yet:

ELLIOT

Don't you have annoying people at your office?

MAGNUS

Annoying is in the eye of the beholder.

ELLIOT

These people are annoying my eye.

MAGNUS

So get new glasses, my friend.  
(then)  
We're here.

ELLIOT

Here where? A blank door with no address?

MAGNUS

It's a very exclusive club.

ELLIOT

What kind of club doesn't have a sign or a street address?

MAGNUS

The kind that allows in only the best of the best.

ELLIOT

I thought we were on our way to your place.

MAGNUS

We are. This is the scenic route.

ELLIOT

I was looking forward to you, not you and a crowd.

MAGNUS

Elliot, just try it before dismissing it.

ELLIOT

I can have a lot more fun at your place.

MAGNUS

Let's have fun here, this is where we are right now. Try it once. Please.

Elliot gets it.

ELLIOT

Hey, I survived climbing the cliff...

MAGNUS

Atta, boy. And the views here are just as stunning.

He winks, Elliot laughs, they enter -- perhaps off stage. The LIGHTS GO VERY DIM, maybe with a BLUE GLOW to them... and some LOUD SENSUOUS MUSIC plays. Elliot comes back on stage, he can barely see. He tries to move with the beat a little but feels awkward. He looks around, tries to make eye contact, waves to people, shouts HELLO a few times. He ultimately feels lost and finally decides to exit the club.

LIGHTS SHIFT to the usual brightness. Elliot comes back on, as if on the sidewalk again. He looks around, wonders what to do. Finally Magnus joins him.

MAGNUS (CONT'D)

Where did you go?

ELLIOT

I needed some air.

MAGNUS

There was air in there.

ELLIOT

No, actually there wasn't.

(MORE)



ELLIOT (CONT'D)

It was being sucked out of the room  
by all the posers.

MAGNUS

Are you calling me a poser?

ELLIOT

No, no, you're fine, but the rest of  
them were doing Attitude Throwdown.

MAGNUS

You didn't get to know any of them.

ELLIOT

I couldn't over the music.

MAGNUS

(ignoring that)

You stood there not mixing.

ELLIOT

Magnus, I tried, I really did, for  
like a half an hour. But I got tired  
of shouting and frankly, no one seemed  
interested in chatting with me. I  
enjoy a good conversation, not getting  
drunk and dancing. It's just not my  
scene.

MAGNUS

Elliot, the world opens up when you  
open up to the world.

ELLIOT

That's not the point. This place  
isn't me!

MAGNUS

No, you're a hermit crab living in a  
shell of complaints and neuroses.  
Have fun there. I'm going back  
inside.

Magnus exits back into the nightclub.

Elliot storms off. Fiona, Des, Rob, and Barbara Ann enter.

FIONA

'It completely matters. I was a  
loser that you and your cronies made  
fun of and you took on my campaign  
as a bet not because you believed in  
me.'

DESMOND

'It's more complicated than that.'

FIONA

'If Teddy hadn't told me, I'd still think you really believed in me!'

ROBINSON

Aaannd... Teddy enters.

They all look around, pissed.

FIONA

Barbara Ann?

BARBARA ANN

Forty-seven minutes.

FIONA

At least he's not as late as you were, Des.

DESMOND

Maybe he booked another job.

FIONA

Like you did?

DESMOND

And what do you mean by that, Miss Fiona?

FIONA

Elliot sort've implied...

DESMOND

Implied what?

FIONA

Easy there, buster, we all do it.

Des inadvertently looks at Rob, who's intrigued.

ROBINSON

Were you doing another benefit?

DESMOND

I told you, it was canned salmon. One day. And it's done.

The gang's not completely buying that.

DESMOND (CONT'D)

See if I give you any free samples.

Just then Elliot runs in, looking very stressed.

ELLIOT

I'm so sorry, I'm so sorry, I'm ready,  
where are we, where are we...?

ROBINSON

Traffic?

FIONA

Cell phone?

BARBARA ANN

Car?

ELLIOT

Car.

BARBARA ANN

Accident?

ELLIOT

Sort've.

ROBINSON

Did you have to hitchhike?

ELLIOT

No, I took the bus, hitchhiking  
would've been faster.

ROBINSON

I once hitchhiked from Boston to  
Sarasota in three days.

Elliot can't believe he just said that.

ELLIOT

Great.

(then)

Where are we?

BARBARA ANN

Scene Five.

The actors get in to place, Elliot's in the wings. A beat,  
then they begin:

FIONA

'You did this on a BET?!'

DESMOND

'It's not a bet.'

FIONA

'There was money involved for the  
winner -- that, Mr. Ziegler, is a  
bet.'

DESMOND

'You're THIS CLOSE to winning a Senate race, what the hell does it matter why I --'

FIONA

'It matters because you think I'm a piece of clay that you can mold and then collect a bounty on my performance!'

DESMOND

'You'll win, nothing else matters.'

FIONA

'It completely matters. I was a loser that you and your cronies made fun of and you --' Rob! I'm still having trouble believing she didn't vet this guy before she hired him!!

ROBINSON

She did. He lied. He's a very good liar.

FIONA

Well, this woman is a complete idiot. I can't play this part.

ELLIOT

(from off)

I'll do it.

Fiona glares towards Elliot, offstage.

ROBINSON

When they met, Margaret loved the fact that he shone his light upon her. She felt special. And that trumped everything. No one's going to think you're an idiot, you're going to sell the audience on Margaret's idealism --

FIONA

-- I can't do it, I can't do it.

By now Elliot has entered from the wings... and just wants to weep.

ROBINSON

Sweetie, let's go to my office and I'll show you the photo of me as a dancing toilet bowl brush... and if I can allow that photo to happen, Margaret can mess up, too.

(MORE)

ROBINSON (CONT'D)  
(to the guys)  
Run lines to warm up, we'll be right  
back.

Rob puts his arm around Fiona and they exit.

ELLIOT  
Barbara Ann, I know you're not a  
pharmacist but do you have any kind  
of pain reliever?

BARBARA ANN  
How strong?

ELLIOT  
Howitzer.

BARBARA ANN  
I'll get something from the drugstore.

ELLIOT  
Thanks.

She exits.

DESMOND  
Your car?

ELLIOT  
I backed into a wall last night. I  
was... really distracted. Personal  
stuff.

DESMOND  
Ah.

ELLIOT  
... How are you?

DESMOND  
Fine.

ELLIOT  
Keeping busy?

DESMOND  
I am.

ELLIOT  
That must feel good.

DESMOND  
Mmhm.

ELLIOT

... Will Dr. Mengele be making an appearance?

DESMOND

He might.

ELLIOT

... Booking a flight to Bangkok?

DESMOND

He might.

ELLIOT

I hope it all works out.

DESMOND

Me, too.

Elliot can't stand it, so tries this as a way in:

ELLIOT

I know you can't tell Rob ahead of time. He'd want to replace you before we open --

DESMOND

So why did you tell him I double-booked?

ELLIOT

I didn't. I, we were all guessing where you were the other day. I also said your cell phone could've died.

DESMOND

'Also.' So you said something.

ELLIOT

I said maybe you had another job -- which you did -- the canned salmon commercial. I didn't say a damn thing about the movie in Bangkok. I swear.

DESMOND

Well, Fiona thinks I'm double-booked, you must've led them there because no one else here knows.

ELLIOT

I can't control the paranoid mind of Fiona Patrick, she thinks the worse of everything.

Rob and Fiona re-enter. Her hair is messed up, her lipstick smeared, his shirt is untucked. Elliot stares at them, livid.

ROBINSON

All righty then, sports fans, places for scene five.

ELLIOT

Uh, Barbara Ann is across the street, maybe we should wait?

ROBINSON

No worries, we can start without her. Here we go.

Elliot goes to the wings. Fiona gets into place.

FIONA

'You did this on a BET?!'

DESMOND

'It's not a bet.'

FIONA

'There was money involved for the winner -- that, Mr. Ziegler, is a bet.'

DESMOND

'You're THIS CLOSE to winning a Senate race, what the hell does it matter why I --'

FIONA

'It matters because you think I'm a piece of clay that you can mold and then collect a bounty on my performance!'

DESMOND

'You'll win, nothing else matters.'

FIONA

'It completely matters. I was a loser that you and your' -- I can't believe she's calling herself a loser! This writer has no idea how to write women!

ELLIOT

(off)  
Jesus Christ!

FIONA

Excuse me??

He enters.

ELLIOT

What the hell are you going to do --  
rewrite it for him?!

FIONA

I didn't ask for your opinion!

ELLIOT

You're not shy about sharing yours.  
You stop every scene with eight  
million complaints -- at some point,  
you have to play the part, and if  
you can't, I'm sure there's a boatload  
of actresses in L.A. who CAN.

Fiona then stares at Rob, as in, "Make him pay for that."  
Then everyone stares at Elliot, stunned and appalled. He  
realizes he way overstepped.

\*  
\*  
\*

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Or not.

\*  
\*

He smiles a polite nervous smile.

\*

END OF ACT ONE



## ACT TWO

LIGHTS UP. Elliot sits slumped in a chair at a cafe. After a few beats, Allison enters with cups of coffee. \*

ALLISON

Ellie!

ELLIOT

Hi, Allie.

ALLISON

I'm so sorry!

ELLIOT

Thanks for coming -- you could've waited til you were off work.

ALLISON

I can work from home after I drop you off. Here's some caffeine to jolt you back to life.

ELLIOT

If only that would work for my car.

ALLISON

What happened?

ELLIOT

I backed into a wall.

ALLISON

Well, that's not too bad. Is it just the fender?

ELLIOT

At speed. And then I drove over those knives-in-the parking gate thing the wrong way and blew out all my tires.

ALLISON

Wow. Was the parking area not well-lit, maybe you could sue.

ELLIOT

It was well-lit.

She can tell he doesn't want to get into it.

ALLISON

Do you need a ride to rehearsal tomorrow?

ELLIOT

No, that's okay.

ALLISON

How will you get there?

ELLIOT

Uh, the bus.

ALLISON

The bus?? All the way from North Hollywood to Santa Monica? That probably involves eight transfers and you should've left six hours ago.

ELLIOT

I'll figure it out.

ALLISON

Let me know.  
(then)  
How are rehearsals?

ELLIOT

Okay.

She waits for details... which are not forthcoming.

ALLISON

That was the shortest answer you've ever given to that question.

He shrugs.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

When do you want Magnus and I to come? Opening night?

ELLIOT

I'll let you know.

ALLISON

I saw that nice article in *The Times* about the play. I think you made the right choice, even if it is a smaller part. And the story sounds wonderful, I love juicy insider stuff about politics.

Elliot says nothing.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

Elliot, what's wrong?

ELLIOT

My car's in the shop and I feel awful, did you not get the memo?

ALLISON

You're not looking at me and you're shifting a lot.

ELLIOT

(stares at her)

Life Sucks. How's that?

ALLISON

I get that. There's something else.

ELLIOT

Must you torture me?

ALLISON

This isn't torture, this is a friend looking out for you. What the hell is wrong??

ELLIOT

My car will cost me more than I have in my checking account or on my credit card, I've invited Magnus to a swanky hotel in Santa Monica for opening night, except I've been fired from the play in Santa Monica, so there won't BE an opening night or even the lousy 13 bucks a performance to pay for things like lunch and bus money. There, ya happy now?

Silence. Then:

ALLISON

... I'm sorry.

(then gently)

What happened?

ELLIOT

I opened my big fat mouth when I shouldn't have. Go ahead. Give me the speech.

She does not. Instead, after a couple of beats, she reaches across the table and holds his hand, which unnerves him but he finally accepts the gesture. After a few more beats:

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I'm an idiot.

ALLISON

No, you're human. What set you off?

ELLIOT

The lead actress. She complains a lot. Oh, the irony.

(then)

I need to get a real job.

ALLISON

Acting is your job. In the mean time, would you like a loan?

ELLIOT

Oh, I think I'll call my father. He already thinks I'm a loser so what's one more strike against me?

ALLISON

Elliot, your father thinks the President is a Muslim. His is not a reliable reality.

ELLIOT

Yes, but I've been at this for 25 years. With no discernable benefit. I'm in a very taxing HOBBY.

ALLISON

Elliot, this is not a hobby. Since college I've watched you commit yourself 110 percent to acting.

ELLIOT

Then why can't I earn a living at it, Allison?

ALLISON

I don't know. I don't know why teachers get paid dirt and basketball players are millionaires. But I know you're the real deal.

ELLIOT

Tell that to my bank account.

ALLISON

You just need a supplemental income, that's all. You're still the person who made me cry when you did *Shadow Box* and made me fall out of my chair laughing when you did *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*.

ELLIOT

(takes that in)

... Thank you.

Allison nods. A moment between them, then she exits. A few beats, then Elliot slowly pulls out his cell phone, takes a deep breath and speed dials a number.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

(as it's ringing)

Do I want him to pick up or not?

(then, lost)

Do I want him or not?

(gets voicemail)

... Hi Magnus, I, uh, boy, where to begin? Look, I'm sorry I ran out on you the other night, it just wasn't my kind of place, please believe me. And, uh, since then, I've had a rough couple of days, car stuff, job stuff. Call me back and I'll give you the sordid details. Talk soon. Bye.

He hangs up, LIGHTS SHIFT.

Suddenly good ol' Stu happily enters. He holds a stack of boxed sets of DVDs.

STU

Loved every minute of 'em! My God, they don't make 'em like that any more.

Elliot snaps out of his reverie.

ELLIOT

Uh, no, they don't. You could've mailed them to me.

STU

Oh, heavens no, they're too precious. I wouldn't want the monkeys at the post office crushing them and I oughta know. Besides, I wanted to have coffee and catch up. How's *Running* running?

ELLIOT

Ahhh, boy...

STU

Oh, c'mon, don't be modest.

ELLIOT

Challenging.

STU

Well, if it's not challenging, any idiot could do it.

ELLIOT

Yeah, I suppose.

STU

So what night do you want us to come? It pretty much has to be a Thursday, since we open first.

ELLIOT

Oh, I, gee, Stu...

STU

And it's not just me and LuAnn. We've got a group of 12, other company members and spouses, we're gonna carpool. Can we get a group rate?

A beat.

ELLIOT

I'm not in the show.

STU

... My God, what happened?

ELLIOT

Creative differences.

STU

Are they loony tunes? Is the director a maniac like Patti?

ELLIOT

No.

STU

The star -- Fiona What's Her Name -- I've heard stories, are they true?

ELLIOT

Yes.

STU

I'm so sorry. What did you tell them, you just couldn't work under those conditions?

ELLIOT

... They told me to leave. They fired me.

STU

Oh. Why?

ELLIOT

It actually was Fiona. Well, it was me. Well, she's a bitch, but I couldn't keep my mouth shut. Stu, what am I gonna do?

STU

... I have no idea. I just show up and say my lines.

ELLIOT

... It's not a bad philosophy.

STU

It's not gonna get me anywhere.

ELLIOT

I thought you didn't want to go anywhere.

STU

I don't. But if I did.

ELLIOT

Sure.

(a long beat)

... I swore I wasn't gonna ask...

(can't resist)

How's it going?

Stu shakes his head.

STU

The new guy is playing Marvin like Ralph Kramden.

ELLIOT

Patti must be thrilled.

STU

Actually, no. She sees how awful it is, especially if I'm doing Ed Norton. We might as well be throwing cream pies at each other.

(MORE)

STU (CONT'D)

(a beat)  
We miss you.

ELLIOT

'We'?

STU

Patti even said if only you were  
still in the show.

ELLIOT

No.

Stu nods, "It's true," then:

STU

And she came this close to firing  
him last week.

ELLIOT

Well, be that as it may, I can't go  
back. She couldn't direct people to  
a garage sale.

(a few beats, then)

Thanks for returning these, Stu...  
and for... not judging my inglorious  
exit from West Side Rep.

STU

Of course. I've worked with you. I  
know how good you are.

ELLIOT

Right back at ya.

(a few beats)

I guess this is, ah, goodbye. Our  
paths probably won't...

Stu nods sadly. They both sit there, morose.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

We made a good team.

Stu nods. Several beats, then...

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

... Does anyone else ever direct at  
Foothill?

STU

Rarely. Patti does most of the shows.

ELLIOT

Has she ever directed anything good  
at Foothill?



STU

... Actually, she did a nice job on *Born Yesterday*.

ELLIOT

What was different?

STU

Nothing. She dithers. I let it roll right by me and keep an eye out for the occasional gem.

ELLIOT

Was it a good cast?

STU

Yeah. As good as we get out here. The gal playing the Judy Holliday role was a pro, like you.

ELLIOT

And she put up with Patti?

STU

(nods)

They had their moments, but they worked 'em out.

ELLIOT

... Why can't I do that?

STU

I don't know. God, I have to do it every day with the numbskulls at the post office.

ELLIOT

You're a saint.

STU

Na. I'm just practical. I have to pay my mortgage.

ELLIOT

... How many days til you open?

STU

Six.

They look at each other.

STU (CONT'D)

Do you still have the lines memorized?

Elliot nods "Yes."

ELLIOT

... Do you think Patti would talk to me?

STU

I'm sure she would. You actually want to come back?

ELLIOT

... Frankly, I could use the money... but more importantly, I'd get to learn how to deal with numbskulls from the Master of Customer Service.

Stu grins, they connect. Then they exit.

LIGHTS SHIFT. We're back at Foothill and by now real furniture makes up the set. Patti enters and she and Elliot regard each other warily. Stu waits for one of them to speak and when neither does:

STU

... Patti?  
(nothing, so:)  
Elliot?  
(nothing, so:)  
C'mon, you guys. Make nice.

ELLIOT

(to Patti)  
... What do you need from me, Patti?

PATTI

I need this show not to be up Shit Creek.

ELLIOT

I can help you with that.

PATTI

Can you do it without undermining me?

Elliot bristles but holds his tongue.

ELLIOT

Can you be here a hundred percent?

Patti bristles. Silence.

STU

... Should we just tell the board of directors we're canceling the show and you both can blame each other?  
(then)  
Or maybe you can set aside your differences and work together.

A few beats.

ELLIOT

I, uh, certainly can. This is a good play and a good team and I'm going to give it my best shot. You can count on that, Patti. Consider my attitude adjusted.

PATTI

Wonderful.

Elliot waits for her mea culpa... which is not forthcoming. Instead he gets:

PATTI (CONT'D)

(yelling to back of house)

Newton, bring in the ladder and get Elliot up to speed!

NEWTON

(off)

I could use some help here!

PATTI

(exiting)

I'm coming, I'm coming; God, do I have to do everything!

Patti briskly runs out through the audience, as Elliot's eyes go wide. He starts to go after her.

ELLIOT

Hello -- olive branch?!

Stu stops Elliot.

STU

Suck it up, suck it up, suck it up!

ELLIOT

She didn't make one concession!

STU

Let it go, let it go, let it go!

Elliot YELLS so Patti can hear him.

ELLIOT

What about the other actor who was --

PATTI

(off)

-- I already fired him.

ELLIOT

But you didn't know that I would  
come back.

PATTI

(off)

Yeah, I did.

Just then, from the house lobby, we hear a LOUD CRASH --  
it's a dropped ladder banging to the ground.

PATTI (CONT'D)

(off)

Fuck!

NEWTON

(off)

Shit!

Patti and Newton enter, carrying a tall ladder and making  
their way down an aisle to the front of house area.

NEWTON (CONT'D)

Damn it to hell and back.

PATTI

Why does the washer have to be on  
the second floor?!

NEWTON

That's the concept of the play and I  
think I hurt my hand!

PATTI

You're the one with the first aid  
kit!

NEWTON

Swing wide!!

PATTI

Too fast!!

They drop the ladder with a CLANG so it's in front of the  
front row of seats or at the far downstage area of the stage.  
As Newton sets up the ladder, Patti explains to Elliot.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Okay, the ladder's here for Act II,  
Scene 5 -- you and Herb play the  
scene right here. Newton, is the  
window washer unit ready?

NEWTON

Yes.

They all look up. Hanging from the rafters is a gizmo the width of a bedroom window. If need be, Newton can press a button (real or fake) to lower the washer device so it meets the ladder's height.

PATTI

Tell Elliot how it works.

NEWTON

All you have to do is press the red button. That will activate both the spray and the wiper, and I will have already turned on the water supply. The spray is a very fine mist -- not Niagara Falls.

Elliot has climbed up the ladder by now. He presses the button, a fine mist comes out and a windshield wiper comes down and then goes back up as if doing a squeegee number on a window.

PATTI

... The kid's a genius.

Newton smiles smugly, vindicated.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Okay, places. Marvin's on the ladder, Herb's nervously doing look-out... Begin.

ELLIOT

'Test number 18...'

He presses the red button, gets mist and wiper action.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'Herbie, we've done it!!'

STU

'We're ready to pitch to Callahan!'

ELLIOT

'Wait -- wait -- the bottom inch isn't clean. We've got to adjust the level of descent... Hand me a screwdriver.'

STU

'Maybe we should take it down first, Marvin.'

ELLIOT

'No, no, this is a simple adjustment...'

Stu grabs a screwdriver from a toolbox or a toolbelt, then climbs up the ladder.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'I'll fix this in a jiff and then we'll be all set...'

NEWTON

Sound of car approaching.

STU

'Oh, no!'

ELLIOT

"Muriel's not due back til four!"

Stu has scrambled down the ladder and looks up the aisle.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Newton, what can I touch on this?

NEWTON

There's a fake screw that doesn't really attach to anything, it's got a blue dot on it.

PATTI

Genius.

(then)

Keep going.

STU

'Wait -- it's the Harrisons -- all clear.'

ELLIOT

'Great. Hand me the pliers.'

Stu grabs pliers and goes up the ladder again.

STU

'You all set for Muriel's birthday party tomorrow?'

ELLIOT

'Cake, punch, chicken...'

NEWTON

'Potato salad, coleslaw.'

PATTI

Let him call 'line.'

ELLIOT

'Potato salad, coleslaw. And Muriel's favorite rum.'

STU

'That's the ticket.'

ELLIOT

'She'll think Callahan is an old neighbor she hasn't seen in 15 years.'

STU

'IF she sees him -- and I'll make sure she doesn't.'

ELLIOT

'Okay, test number 19...'

NEWTON

Sound of car approaching.

STU

'Hang on...'

He goes up the aisle to look.

STU (CONT'D)

'It's Muriel!'

ELLIOT

'Cripes! Herb, we've got to hide the ladder!'

(then)

Patti, what do you want us to do?

PATTI

Take down the ladder, go up the aisle.

ELLIOT

Yes, but how?

PATTI

For full comic effect.

A beat. Is Elliot going to lose his temper? No.

ELLIOT

Okay.

(then)

'Cripes! Herb, we've got to hide the ladder!'

Elliot climbs down, he and Stu take down the ladder and then try to take it up the aisle -- looking like a couple of bozos doing it. Elliot stops, pissed.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Patti...

PATTI

It looked great. Honest.

ELLIOT

And, the chaos needs to be choreographed. We don't want to take out the first row or run into a wall the way you and Newton did.

Patti's cell phone RINGS. Uh oh. Elliot and Patti have a stare down... but he holds his tongue.

PATTI

(calmly)  
I'll be right back.  
(answering politely  
for Elliot's sake)  
Yes, Curtis?...  
(loses it)  
... HOUSTON?! As in TEXAS?! Curtis  
Michael, what the hell are you doing  
in Texas??

She goes off. Elliot and Stu exchange concerned looks and then stand there waiting. After awhile, they can't help themselves...

ELLIOT

... You know what this could be like... the *I Love Lucy* episode where --

STU

-- Little Ricky is born!

ELLIOT

Exactly! So first we have to pull the ladder down safely --

They do.

STU

Then we go in two different directions.

They do.

ELLIOT

Then we reverse.

They do.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Then we overshoot the aisle.

They do -- and Patti comes back in.



PATTI

(on phone)

Curtis, get back here right this instant! You cannot live in Texas until you're 18 and maybe not even then, God help me.

(then)

Curtis Michael, I'm calling the police. I mean it.

(then)

Curtis?... Curtis?

(then)

He hung up on me!!

Tack #1, pretend that didn't happen.

ELLIOT

Um, we were improvising, I hope that was okay. Anything can be changed.

PATTI

He bought a used Harley with his track earnings and drove to Houston where he's going to sign up to work on an oil rig!

Tack #2, logic.

ELLIOT

And he's almost 18?

PATTI

If he dies, I'll never forgive myself. Maybe I should book a flight to Houston -- Newton, can you research flights to --

NEWTON

-- Already done. There's one out at 7:40 tomorrow morning.

Tack #3, begging.

ELLIOT

Patti, don't do anything drastic, I'm sure that --

PATTI

-- Drastic? I'll show you drastic -- my son's a wildcatter! He used to make the cutest collages out of macaroni and spray paint. Then he started sniffing the paint and it all went down hill. Where did I go wrong? I had him play soccer, I took him on ski trips, I got him the latest video games...

Tack #4, therapist approach.

ELLIOT

Patti, there comes a time when...

NEWTON

This better be good.

ELLIOT

(concedes that, then)

There comes a time when...

(then)

Sons are a strange breed and...

(then)

Parents look at the their kids and think...

(fuck it)

Patti, we have a reasonable shot at turning *Marvin and his Marvelous Invention* into a really fun piece of theatre. I know you can't stop worrying about Curtis and I'm not asking you to. But right here, right now is where you need to be. This is where you're going to get a shot at satisfaction, at happiness, at artistic fulfillment. You deserve it. We all deserve it. You commit to this moment and it'll pay big dividends.

NEWTON

Nice.

Stu gives a thumbs up, Elliot beams. Patti actually heard all of that.

PATTI

... Thank you, Elliot. I'm sorry I haven't been here for you. Goddamnit, you're right. I'm not wasting another minute on him. He's got to learn how to navigate his own life.

She hands her cell phone to Newton.

PATTI (CONT'D)

Don't let me answer this.

NEWTON

If it rings I could crush it.

PATTI

Overkill but thank you.

(MORE)

PATTI (CONT'D)

(then)

Okay, bathroom break, then show me what you've got. Oliver and LuAnn will be here any second, you'll see how they fit into the mix. Oliver's playing Callahan -- quite a character!

NEWTON

Should I write down their blocking?

PATTI

Have at it, I'm sure it's brilliant.

Patti goes off to the bathroom. Newton furiously scribbles down the blocking.

ELLIOT

'Quite a character'?

Stu mimes drinking.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Great.

STU

She cast Oliver because he's an investment banker, just like Callahan.

ELLIOT

How does she get away with this?

STU

She's on the Selection Committee and pretty much dictates to the Board what she wants.

ELLIOT

We need to stage a coup.

STU

Right there with ya. Say, Elliot, is, uh, is, uh, your agent coming to the show?

ELLIOT

That, sir, is an excellent question. I'm hoping.

STU

I hope so, too. I mean, for you. Well, I was kind've asking for me, too, uh, gosh, I'm terrible at stuff like this, but you said he represents character actors, and I thought I'd take you up on your offer. If that's what you said. Is it?

ELLIOT

I did. I'll... give him a call.

STU

Great. Thanks. I really appreciate it, and if you can't, then don't.

(then)

I think I'll hit the men's room, too.

He goes off. Elliot pulls out his cell phone and dials.

ELLIOT

Hi, Darlene... Well, in many ways good, thanks for asking. I'm back at Foothill Theatre and I have an actor friend I'd like to introduce Alvin to... he wants to talk to me? Of course I'll hold.

(to himself)

What did it take, the fresh bait of someone new to rep?

(Alvin gets on the line)

Alvin! How are you! Hey, I have some exciting news -- I'm back at Foothill in Altadena, the old Bickell and Mason chestnut *Marvin and his Marvelous Invention*, and I have this wonderful co-star I want to tell you about, he's --

Alvin: I also have some news.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Oh? What's that?

Alvin: I heard you bad-mouthed Fiona Patrick.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Ah, well, Miss Fiona had some self-defeating behavior of her own --

(now consciously choosing the high road)

-- but, uh, yes, I flew off the handle and I promise you it will never happen again.

Alvin: You'll never work there again.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Alvin, people in show business have short memories. In six months it'll be forgotten and I'll easily be able to get back to West Side Rep.

(MORE)

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

But the important thing is I got that job and this job at Foothill because I hustled. Just imagine what I could do with your input. We could use this show as a springboard to --

Alvin: Elliot, nobody cares what's happening in Alta Fucking Dena.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Alvin, I care what's happening in Alta Fucking Dena. If you came out here, you'd see how good I am, and if you'd return my phone calls, we could build something together.

Alvin: I have other priorities.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Okay then. I'll be my own priority and find an agent who can get behind me.

He hangs up on Alvin. Elliot's eyes meet Newton's.

NEWTON

You deep-sixed your agent?

Elliot nods.

NEWTON (CONT'D)

You do this quitting thing a lot, huh?

ELLIOT

This time it's not quitting. It's being pro-active.

LIGHTS SHIFT, Newton exits. Elliot's PHONE RINGS. It's Allison, who enters with her cell phone.

ALLISON

Elliot, it's your best friend, Allison.

ELLIOT

... And by that you mean?

ALLISON

I had lunch with Magnus today. He told me he called West Side Rep to make reservations.

ELLIOT

I can explain.

ALLISON

Not yet. I need to vent. I let him call the ticket office, thinking he knew WHICH ticket office --

ELLIOT

-- Allison --

ALLISON

-- And he mentioned to the West Side Rep person that his friend was in the show and they said 'What's his name?' You can imagine how it went from there. Now you can explain.

ELLIOT

I called Magnus five days ago and he never called me back.

ALLISON

I'm sure there was a good reason. What did you say?

ELLIOT

Excuse me, what did I say? How about what he said? He called me a hermit crab!

ALLISON

Well, if the shell fits...

ELLIOT

ALLISON! Why are you taking his side? You don't know my side -- he took me to a nightclub where every guy in there was under 35 and looked like they spent 80 hours a week at Gold's Gym! I don't like that kind of place and I don't need to apologize to either of you for that. You fancy yourself my Life Coach but did you actually think about who I am and what I like?! Why did you introduce me to Magnus? So you could bring him to plays and show him off? Now excuse me, I have an opening night to get ready for.

He hangs up and exits. Allison winces, guilty as charged, and then exits as well.

BLACKOUT. LIGHTS UP. It's opening night at Foothill.

Stu and LuAnn are on stage, wearing their late 50's / early 60's costumes, checking props and going over their blocking and lines. Each of them mumbles, it's almost sounds as if monks are chanting. Each is very focused.

Suddenly there is a horrific CRASH offstage. They each look up. Bambi-in-headlights-time.

LUANN

What was that?

STU

We don't get a lot of car crashes out here...

LUANN

Maybe something fell, like a really tall tree.

STU

There's no wind.

LUANN

Did a building fall over?

STU

From what? A wrecking ball?

Newton enters from backstage.

NEWTON

What was that?

STU

We don't know.

NEWTON

Oh, God, it's going to be bad, and I'm going to have to fix it.

STU

Get out the duct tape.

NEWTON

(looking up)

Everything looks okay in here --

Stu and LuAnn also look up as Elliot runs in, shaving cream on his face.

ELLIOT

What was that?

EVERYONE

We don't know.

ELLIOT

The water pressure dipped.

LUANN

The water? Water doesn't crash like that.

ELLIOT

Well, something else probably caused  
the --

Patti runs in from the front of the house. She's all dressed  
up -- but frazzled.

PATTI

Curtis is back!

A beat of panic in everyone's eyes, Elliot covers.

ELLIOT

That's, that's great Patti. I'm  
sure you're thrilled he's no longer  
wildcatting in Tex --

PATTI

-- He and a friend borrowed a van in  
Texas to move back here and they  
just crashed it into a fire hydrant  
out front!

LUANN

Is he all right?

PATTI

He's fine but the hydrant is blowing  
like Mt. Vesuvius out there.

ELLIOT

That would explain the dip in water  
pressure.

A SOUND OF A SIREN APPROACHING.

PATTI

I've got to go deal with this -- are  
you guys all set?

STU

We'll be fine, Patti. The show's in  
good shape.

NEWTON

Where's Oliver?

PATTI

How the hell would I know? God, the  
city of Altadena will probably sue  
me for the fire hydrant. I'll be  
right back.

ELLIOT

Take your time!

She's gone.



LUANN

Oh, God...

ELLIOT

LuAnn, things will be fine.

NEWTON

The water pressure could be a problem.

ELLIOT

I don't need to shave, the audience won't be able to tell.

NEWTON

The window washer -- it's so high up, it needs good water pressure to do its misting action.

LUANN

Oh, no!

ELLIOT

LuAnn, don't worry.

NEWTON

Don't worry?! The entire second act is building to that moment!

ELLIOT

Newton, the mist is so fine, if it doesn't happen, the audience won't notice anyway.

NEWTON

It's not THAT fine.

ELLIOT

Do you want to climb up there with a spritzer bottle? We'll just pretend it's a delicate mist and the audience will believe it if we believe it.

NEWTON

It doesn't work that way in science.

ELLIOT

It does in theatre. Go ahead check on it, but don't sweat it.

Newton starts to exit.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

Oh, wait, did you get a chance to ask the ticket office --

NEWTON

-- Yes, your comp tickets have been  
picked up.

ELLIOT

Who did the picking up? Male or  
female?

NEWTON

WE HAVE BIGGER PROBLEMS TO WORRY  
ABOUT.

Newton exits. Elliot explains to Stu:

ELLIOT

Gotta impress my special someone.

STU

We'll put on a good show for him.

They turn and look -- LuAnn is going over her lines again,  
at 150 m.p.h., zipping around the set. The guys follow her  
trying to get her to stop.

ELLIOT

LuAnn, you don't want to peak too  
early -- save some energy for the  
show.

STU

LuAnn, you know your lines cold.

LUANN

I know but it helps me to go over  
them.

ELLIOT

You were great last night at dress  
rehearsal.

STU

You hit every mark, you nailed every  
moment.

Patti runs in.

PATTI

Where's Newton -- I need him to do  
some research.

ELLIOT

Research!?

STU

He's backstage checking on the water  
press --

PATTI

-- NEWTON -- WHERE ARE YOU?! I need  
a lawyer!

LUANN

Lawyer?

Newton enters.

PATTI

Newton, where's your iPhone, I need  
a phone number -- there's a law firm  
on Lake Street in Pasadena --  
Greenfield and something or Green  
and Fieldstone or Greensto --

NEWTON

-- The water pressure is almost non-  
existent. Have they turned off the  
water main?

PATTI

How would I know?

NEWTON

You were outside.

PATTI

I'm dealing with the police! And I  
have the answer to your other  
question: Oliver slipped on the wet  
sidewalk. Lawsuit number two. Get  
me that lawyer's number -- I'll be  
in the lobby!

ELLIOT

The lobby -- don't we have patrons  
out there?!

PATTI

I don't want to get sprayed by the  
fire hydrant, I'm wearing a \$200  
dress!

And with that, she exits.

ELLIOT

Patti, don't let the patrons know  
anything is wrong, talk in MODULATED  
TONES!

(then)

Christ.

LUANN

This is going to go badly, isn't it?

ELLIOT

It'll be fine. Curtis's reality is not our reality.

LUANN

But he's in our reality. He's right out there.

They all stare at the back of the house, worried. A few bests, then:

ELLIOT

(to Stu)

... Have they every canceled a show here?

STU

Nooo... Had an earthquake scare one Sunday matinee during *Born Yesterday*. We just ignored it.

NEWTON

You want to quit again, don't you?

ELLIOT

No, no, I, I just want us to put our best foot forward. I suppose once the audience gets past the gushing fire hydrant and Patti screaming at Curtis and the fire department blocking the street, they'll nicely settle in to our idyllic suburban fantasy, and they'll be fine.

PATTI

(off)

NO, CURTIS, YOU CAN'T TAKE A TURN USING THE FIRE HOSE!

ELLIOT

Here we go.

BLACKOUT. LIGHTS UP on *Marvin and His Marvelous Invention*.

Elliot's on the couch, Stu enters from the kitchen area, snoops around, finds a piece of paper, reads it.

STU

'The bastards.'

ELLIOT

'Ahhhh!'

STU

'How could they not give us a contract and why didn't you tell me??'

A BULLHORN SIREN SOUNDS, and now Elliot really jumps.

ELLIOT

'AHHHH!! Why didn't you knock?'

STU

'I knocked, I called, I you-hooded,  
you've been avoiding me, Marvin.'

ELLIOT

'I couldn't bear to tell you, Herb.'

STU

'I say the door's not shut --'

MAN ON BULLHORN

(off)

Open the door and come out with your  
hands up!

STU

'I say we call them right now -- '

CURTIS

(off)

No way!!

STU

'Bo Peep Enterprises needs to know-'

MAN ON BULLHORN

(off)

'Son, we mean business.'

STU

'Uh, yes, we do, we're contenders,  
and they need to manufacture the  
automated baby washer.'

ELLIOT

'You know, Herb, I've been  
thinking...'

A BULLHORN SIREN SOUNDS.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'Remember when Muriel nearly fell  
off that ladder washing the second  
story windows last spring?'

STU

'How could I forget -- I could hear  
her scream over the lawn mower.'

PATTI

(off)

Ahhhhh!!

STU  
(ad libs)  
Seems like yesterday.

ELLIOT  
Sure does.  
(then)  
'I've been doodling...'

STU  
'I love it when you doodle.'

ELLIOT  
'An automated window washer.'

PATTI  
(off)  
Curtis, this is stupid!

ELLIOT  
'Well, I'm rather fond of it. It attaches to the outside of a window frame, at the top, and then with the press of a simple button indoors, you can --'

CURTIS  
'Suck on this one!'

We hear another CRASH.

ELLIOT  
'-- wash your troubles away.'

BLACKOUT. Then STOMPING on the roof. In darkness, loud whispers:

LUANN  
What was that -- reindeer?!

ELLIOT  
Ignore it, LuAnn.

LUANN  
We're being invaded!

LIGHTS UP, a few scenes later, mid-scene. Elliot's cool as a cucumber.

ELLIOT  
'The blade can't be exposed, Herb, it'll harden if it's not used a lot. Maybe we should make it retract all the way.'

PATTI

(off)

Curtis, come down from there!

STU

'Then the housing needs to be even deeper...'

LuAnn enters to the SOUND OF STOMPING on the roof, that drowns her out.

LUANN

'I'm h-o-o-o-o-m-e...'

She stares upwards, Elliot grabs her to get her back in the scene.

ELLIOT

'Hi, honey, how'd it go at the beauty shop?'

Silence, he prompts her.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'Have fun chatting with Betty?'

LUANN

'Oh -- yes! I got the most amazing ideas talking to Betty about my birthday party!'

SOUND OF STOMPING ON ROOF. LuAnn freezes again.

ELLIOT

(ad libs)

Just the neighborhood squirrels at it again. So what did you and Betty come up with?

MORE STOMPING ON THE ROOF.

LUANN

(scared shitless)

'... We uh, we uh, drew up the guest list, the menu, the party favors, the decorations, now all I need is for someone to pull it all together on the 21st.'

ELLIOT

The 21st??

LuAnn cringes, realizing her mistake.

LUANN

Oh, no!

STU

'Here's a thought: The 21st is a MONDAY -- how about we do a big blowout on the 19th!'

ELLIOT

'Then the 19th it is.'

LUANN

'I'm so sorry. I meant the --'

ELLIOT

'No need to worry, honey.'

LUANN

'But don't you have something on the 19th?'

MORE STOMPING ON THE ROOF.

ELLIOT

(chipper)

'Well, we have giant squirrels on the roof, I know that for sure.'

MAN ON BULLHORN

(off)

Come down from there right now.

LUANN

'What do you have on the 19th?'

ELLIOT

'Nothing, not a damn thing.'

MAN ON BULLHORN

(off)

Or we're coming up.

LUANN

'I thought the pitcher was on the mound...'

ELLIOT

'He is. Here's the fastball.'

He kisses LuAnn-as-Muriel. BLACKOUT.

In darkness, loud whispers:

STU

Where's the ladder??

ELLIOT

I have no idea -- Curtis probably stole it to make his escape from the roof. Follow my lead.



LIGHTS UP, several scenes later in the play. The guys stand at the edge of the stage, looking up at the window washer. There is NO LADDER. Elliot is using his car keys as a remote control device.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'Test number 18...'

He aims the car remote at the window washer and presses a button on the remote. We hear a far-off CAR BEEP. Of course there is no mist or wiper, but that doesn't stop the guys' enthusiasm.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'Herbie, we've done it!!'

STU

'We're ready to pitch to Callahan!'

ELLIOT

'Wait -- wait -- the bottom inch isn't clean. We've got to adjust the level of --'

STU

'-- Marv, I don't think we need to, the window is clean enough for the demonstration.'

ELLIOT

'You're right, Herb. We don't need to, I think we're all set.'

He deliberately stares towards the booth where Newton would be. After several beats, a RECORDED SOUND OF A CAR APPROACHING.

STU

'Oh, no!'

ELLIOT

"Muriel's not due back til four!"

Stu looks up the aisle.

STU

'Wait -- it's the Harrisons -- all clear.'

ELLIOT

'Great. Hand me the screwdriver -- you know what, we'll be fine.'

STU

(overlapping)

'We'll be fine.'

(MORE)

STU (CONT'D)

(then)

'You all set for Muriel's birthday party tomorrow?'

ELLIOT

'Yes, yes, I am. Cake, punch, potato salad, coleslaw. And Muriel's favorite rum.'

STU

'That's the ticket.'

Suddenly, a REAL CAR PEELS OUT of there. Elliot and Stu look at each other, What the fuck?

STU (CONT'D)

(tentatively)

'...Hang on.'

Then comes the "RECORDED" CAR COMING TOWARDS THEM.

STU (CONT'D)

(once more, with feeling)

'Hang on...'

He goes up the aisle to look.

STU (CONT'D)

'It's Muriel!'

ELLIOT

'Cripes! Herb, we've got to hide the -- we've got to hide!'

They run out. BLACKOUT. In darkness, loud whispers:

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

I just checked the parking lot -- my rental car's gone -- he hot-wired it!

STU

Look on the bright side, at least he's out of our hair. The rest of the show should be fine.

ELLIOT

Yeah -- except where the hell is Oliver??

LIGHTS UP. The final scene of their play. The ladder is back on stage, below the window washer unit, which hangs from the light grid. Elliot and Stu enter.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)

'Where the hell, uh, heck is Callahan?'

STU

'He's two hours late! He's not coming!'

ELLIOT

'Maybe his plane was delayed. How's Muriel holding up?'

STU

'She saw the ladder out the window. I told her a guest threw his birthday kazoo on the roof and I was getting it for him.'

ELLIOT

'You should get back inside and keep an eye on her.'

STU

'No offense, Marvin, but she's your wife, and I think it's your turn to divert her. In fact, I think we might as well BOTH go inside and drink ourselves silly because Callahan obviously isn't --'

Suddenly LuAnn-as-Muriel enters.

LUANN

'There you are! Marvin, everyone's been asking about you.'

ELLIOT

'I, uh, was just helping Herbie here.'

LUANN

'Does it take two of you to get a kazoo?'

She looks up and sees the window washer unit.

LUANN (CONT'D)

'What's that?'

ELLIOT

'That's uh, that's uh...'

LUANN

'It doesn't look like a kazoo.'

ELLIOT

'It's, uh, not, Muriel. It's a window washer unit.'

STU

'And if I may say so, a marvelous invention.'

LUANN

'How did it get there?'

ELLIOT

'We, uh, we put it there.'

LUANN

(not pleased)

'... You boys have been tinkering again, haven't you?'

STU

'All in the name of progress.'

LUANN

'Marvin, what did I tell you?'

ELLIOT

'Honey, remember how you nearly fell off the ladder trying to clean the second story windows?'

LUANN

'Yes. I threw my back out screaming.'

ELLIOT

'Exactly. So you, my sweet, were my inspiration. Allow me to demonstrate.'

He climbs the ladder as:

STU

(ad libbing a bit)

'The mist can be... a little delicate, barely noticeable, but it's just enough to clean the windows and then the wiper efficiently wipes away the grime.'

Elliot presses a button and a HUGE GUSHER of water rains down and soaks Muriel. A beat.

LUANN

'That's great, dear.'

(ad libs)

'And it waters the lawn, too.'

ELLIOT

(ad libs)

'That's right, honey. Are you okay?'

LUANN

'I'm fine.'

(ad libs)

'Maybe you can invent a portable hair dryer next.'

ELLIOT

'You bet, honey.'

A voice calls...

NEWTON

'Helloooo...'

"CALLAHAN" enters, played by Newton, carrying his script notebook and wearing a headset. Cardboard would give a zestier performance.

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'Are either of you Marvin or Herb?'

BOTH GUYS

(stunned it's Newton)

'Yes.'

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'Betty told me I might find you out here...'

STU

'You're not Betty's husband?'

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'I'd like to be Betty's husband. She's quite a fireball.'

LUANN

'Isn't she? She's my best friend.'

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

(facing the wrong way)

'And you are?'

LUANN

'Over here. Muriel. Marvin's wife. And you are?'

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'Calvin Callahan. Innovative Industries, creative solutions for the modern home.'

LUANN

'Oh, my.'

ELLIOT

'He's a potential investor in our window washer unit -- which is all ready for its big moment.'

He and Stu exchange looks.

STU

(ad libs)

'Here, Mr. Callahan, you might want to step back.'

LUANN

(ad libs)

'That's right.'

NEWTON

Ready washer cue nine.

They escort him back a couple of steps while Elliot climbs back up the ladder.

ELLIOT

'The button would be operated from a switch inside once the unit is fully installed.'

Elliot, Stu and LuAnn all take a deep breath.

NEWTON

Washer cue nine go.

ELLIOT

'Here we go...'

Elliot presses the button again and this time the unit delivers the perfect amount of misty wash, and the squeegee action of the wiper executes beautifully.

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

(totally relieved)

'That is... perfection.'

ELLIOT

'You think so?'

He comes down the ladder.

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'You're on to something, boys.'

STU

'Really?'

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'I thought I was coming out here to see a couple of hayseeds waste my time. But you boys have put time and energy in to something creative, innovative and worthwhile.'

ELLIOT

'Thank you, sir.'

NEWTON/CALLAHAN

'Let's go inside for more of those Mai Tais and talk dollars and business sense. Oh, and, Muriel, can you get me Betty's phone number?'

LUANN

'Get it? I have it memorized.'

Muriel links arms with Newton. As they exit:

LUANN (CONT'D)

'Do you bowl? Betty's practically a professional. She even has her own matching ball and shoes -- starburst blue. You should see the ball when it goes spinning down the lane.'

Elliot and Stu practically fall into each other's arms.

ELLIOT

'Did you hear that, Herb?'

STU

'I did. Dollars and sense.'

ELLIOT

'We did it.'

STU

'We did.'

ELLIOT

'You called it a marvelous invention.'

STU

'Because it is.'

ELLIOT

'Thank you, sir.'

STU

'Thank you.'

NEWTON

(off)

Light cue 55 go.

BLACKOUT. TAPED APPLAUSE. LIGHTS UP -- Elliot, Stu, LuAnn and a reluctant Newton all take a bow together. Then LuAnn and Newton exit, leaving Stu and Elliot to really drink in the applause, appreciate the moment. BLACKOUT, APPLAUSE FADES OUT.

A few beats. LIGHTS UP. Elliot and Stu are comatose and in shock, perhaps flat on their backs, grateful that it's over.

STU

We did it.

ELLIOT

We most certainly did. You, sir, were amazing. Never wobbled, even on the hairpin turns.

STU

I followed your lead, sir.

Newton enters with a bucket and mop to take care of the gusher's puddle.

ELLIOT

Nice save, Newton.

NEWTON

I don't know how you people do it. I would've stopped the show.

ELLIOT

Half the fun was seeing if we could survive it.

STU

Neither snow nor rain nor heat nor gloom of night...

ELLIOT

Nor Curtis on a rampage.

They laugh.

STU

I'm gonna go change. You coming to LuAnn's for the opening night soiree?

ELLIOT

I'm hoping for a dinner date at the Italian place on the square.

STU

*Bon Appetite.* Oh, wait, that's French.

They laugh themselves silly.



ELLIOT

Good show.

STU

You, too.

Stu and Newton exit backstage as Allison enters from the audience.

ALLISON

There he is! Mr. Fabulous!

ELLIOT

Thank you, thanks for coming, Allie, I really appreciate it.

ALLISON

What the hell was up with the bullhorn and the screaming and the running around on the roof??

ELLIOT

I'll explain later.

ALLISON

It wasn't part of the show, was it?

ELLIOT

No.

ALLISON

Oh, Ellie, in that case, an acting award and a purple heart.

She hugs him.

ELLIOT

Thank you.

ALLISON

... Speaking of hearts, I was stood up tonight. Which means you were, too.

Elliot takes that in, looks sad, but then nods he's not surprised.

ALLISON (CONT'D)

I'm so sorry. You okay?

ELLIOT

Yeah. I knew Magnus coming was a long shot. And I wasn't even sure if I wanted... He's a great guy but...

ALLISON

Not the guy for you.

Elliot nods.

ELLIOT

But don't worry. I'm gonna get on it. Gonna check out group I saw on-line -- gay guys who go to theatre.

ALLISON

Perfect.

ELLIOT

I'm gonna get on a lot of things. Gonna get a new agent.

ALLISON

So you got a sign -- to keep acting?

ELLIOT

You could say that.

ALLISON

Keep me posted.

(then)

You feel chipper enough for a birthday party this summer?

ELLIOT

Maybe.

ALLISON

If you show up, I might have a really cool present for you.

ELLIOT

What?

ALLISON

I can't tell.

ELLIOT

Tell me.

ALLISON

You have to show up.

ELLIOT

Tell-me-tell-me-tell-me.

ALLISON

No-no-no.

ELLIOT

Give me a hint.

Allison hums the theme from the old *Dick Van Dyke Show*.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
OMIGOD -- *The Dick Van Dyke Show!* A  
complete collection?

ALLISON  
Show up at the party and see.

ELLIOT  
Omigod, omigod, Rob and Laura and  
Buddy and Sally!

ALLISON  
... Magnus wouldn't get you something  
like that, would he?

ELLIOT  
No.

ALLISON  
Well then. Onward.

Stu enters.

ELLIOT  
Stu! Guess what Allison got me for  
my birthday!

STU  
What?

ELLIOT  
The complete *Dick Van Dyke Show!*

STU  
Score!!

They high five, and they all laugh.

ELLIOT  
Stu, Allison, Allison, Stu.

STU  
Nice to meet you.

ALLISON  
The pleasure is mine. You were  
fabulous tonight.

STU  
That's because I was working with a  
real pro who kept the ship sailing  
even in a hurricane.

ALLISON  
That's him.

ELLIOT  
Stu is my sign.

Stu looks at Elliot.

STU  
Huh?

ELLIOT  
I'm not gonna quit acting.

STU  
You were gonna quit??

ALLISON  
Call me -- we'll compare calendars  
for a party.

ELLIOT  
You got it.

ALLISON  
Bye.

They hug, she exits.

STU  
You were gonna quit?

ELLIOT  
Yeah. And maybe I'm just in the  
adrenaline rush of getting through  
the hurricane tonight... but I've  
been flashing back to that pep talk  
I gave Patti about committing to  
right here, right now. You know  
what we have here? A wonderful space,  
a loyal subscription audience...  
clean rest rooms, plenty of parking...

They laugh.

ELLIOT (CONT'D)  
... and best of all, you.

STU  
Oh, pshaw.

ELLIOT  
And then I thought, there is no way  
in hell they'll let Patti stay on  
the Selection Committee.

STU  
God willing.

ELLIOT

So what we have here, once she's gone, is amazing potential. We get ourselves on the Selection Committee and then we can do the parts we've always wanted.

STU

I'd never thought about something like that before.

ELLIOT

You damn well should. Plus I have professional director friends who would love to work here --

STU

-- Wow, professional directors.

ELLIOT

Stu, we create a few kickass seasons, show 'em what we're made of and then before you know it, we're totally running this thing.

STU

Omigod.

ELLIOT

This could be our baby.

STU

It could.

ELLIOT

Then I'll get a new agent and we'll get you one, too.

STU

Holy c-r-a-p.

ELLIOT

You in?

STU

I'm in.

Then:

ELLIOT

What's your dream role?

STU

... Oscar Madison in *The Odd Couple*.  
You?

ELLIOT

Been dreaming of Felix Unger since I  
was 20. And now I'm finally old  
enough.

PATTI

(in the lobby)  
-- CURTIS! CURTIS! Park that right  
now or you're dead meat!

ELLIOT

My rental car!

STU

Let's get him!

ELLIOT

Curtis, get back here!!

They tear out of there. LIGHTS OUT.

THE END.