

CHARACTERS

ROXANNE

JAKE

HARRY

THE UNDERSTUDY

A gunshot. Harry runs onto the stage, waving a gun around, looking over his shoulder wildly. He suddenly points it at a member of the audience. After a moment.

HARRY. Oh, it's not real. For heaven's sake. *(He waves the gun around and fires it. It just clicks.)* But it looks real. *(He puts it in the back of his pants.)* This is the new cool place to put your gun. Store your weapon. Ow. It's cold. *(Harry stands alone. He looks around the stage, thinking, then puts his hand up to his eyes and studies the booth at the back of the house.)* Hellooooo, anybody up there? *(Beat, to audience.)* I went to this movie last week, it was pretty good but it wasn't, I mean, there were guns and such, it was okay, not, you know, by any stretch of the imagination was it, not that any of them are anymore. I mean it's not — and it's not that I'm bitter. People look at you; they say oh he's an actor who's not like so he must be kind of bitter, and I am, I am bitter, but that doesn't mean that movies don't suck. Because they do, right, they are largely unwatchable except for maybe the maybe three movies a year that are fantastic even though no one much goes to see them and they really don't finally do a whole lot more than make the rest of us feel like total failures because we can't even get cast in the utter bullshit movies that everyone else makes. Not that I consider myself a failure, that's something other people have an issue with, I'm fine with where I am. I really am. So, I went to this movie last week. It was pretty typically, like there was an airplane and guns and explosions, and people screaming, and the plane crashes! Get down, get down! And the whole movie was like that, the dialogue was like — you know, it was utter, and I've heard that people get paid millions, just millions of, to write things like, "get in the truck!" And they're considered really successful, "successful screenwriters," because, "get down, get down" — I'm not bitter. Ah! Come in, come in! *(He is*

suddenly in a scene, bowing formally to an invisible scene partner.) No no of course, I'm just surprised to — I'm surprised to see you. I'm surprised to see you at this strange hour. *(He looks back, thinks, takes a step back, nods to his invisible partner as he enters the room.)* Not at all. I'm simply surprised to see you at this strange hour. *(It is a pure and elegant moment, sustained with perfect pitch. He thinks about this.)* Anyway. I went to this movie. And some people would say that you know, the fact that millions of dollars were spent and gas and electricity wasted so we could watch a plane crash — *(He makes the sound of a big crash.)* because some people like that, they think that's fun and we live in a free market economy, we have that, so-called, invisible hand of the marketplace, it's actually steering things like the hand of fate or the hand of God, and anyway the free market version of this equation steers things toward the greatest good for the greatest number of people and that's why we have this movie that I saw. *(Then, to his invisible scene partner.)* Have a seat, have a seat! This is quite an honor, no that's too desperate — you're not desperate. It's just weird that he's here. "This is quite an honor." Have a seat, please! This is quite an honor. *(He is not satisfied with this.)* Anyway the thing is — and I say this without bitterness — I AUDITIONED for that movie. I did, I went in for an audition and I'm a trained actor and I yelled, "Get down get down!" and I was pretty good, I really gave a fantastic reading of that and other really timeless bits of dialogue, and well, you know, I didn't get the part. Which is fine, I truly have better things to do with my life, it's not like, but the fact is, the hilarious, hilarious fact is, he starred in that movie. I couldn't even get a three line part. And he STARRED in it. And as long as he's not here anyway, let me just share the secret, he is talent-free. Not that — you don't want to be harsh, to a fellow actor, the community, then again, and it's not, okay, I am a LITTLE BITTER but THAT DOESN'T CHANGE FACTS. That his lack of talent grants him a reality that has been DENIED other members of this COMMUNITY is a real — because everyone acts like he is real, I mean REAL in a way that we are not when the opposite is the case! What is reality. You have to ask yourself. I ask myself that all the time. I mean, I'm not bitter, but when HE gets to be the REAL ONE I think we're alllllll allowed a little moment of private rage or or or — the occasional fantasy with a gun — *(A voice yells from the back of the house.)*

JAKE. Hey! What are you doing up there! Hey!

HARRY. *(Caught.)* What?

JAKE. What are you doing there? *(Jake appears in the aisle. He is so handsome and sure of himself you truly want to faint, or puke. He does in fact carry with him an air of reality that the rest of us sadly can only yearn for in the blackest parts of our souls. Harry turns his back on him then suddenly points the gun at Jake as he backs up, across the stage.)*

HARRY. Stay away from me! Stay away from me! *(Then.)* GET IN THE TRUCK! *(Harry dives offstage. Jake gets on the stage, looks after him, confused. Looks out into the house.)*

JAKE. Hey, is anybody up in the booth? There's somebody here who I think is not supposed to be here! Anybody here? Helloooo. Chief. *(He looks around for a moment. The place is deserted. He takes out his cell phone and dials a number, talks into it.)* Yeah, hey it's me, I'm at the theatre and there's like no one here. Did they call you? Well, I don't know, there was supposed to be a rehearsal, a put-in rehearsal? But there's like no one here, like a janitor or something but other than — it's fine it's fine, Tony. I just thought maybe they called your or, it's fine. Listen, while I got you, you hear anything from Paramount? Oh. No no no I realize that, I was just — I'm not nervous! God no. I am so having a blast doing this play. Are you kidding? I'm just saying, if Paramount calls I'd love to hear what the offer is. Or if they're going to someone else, which would be, whatever ... You know what? I don't want to talk about this now. We're doing this put-in rehearsal so my head is like totally, I just meant if they called. Look I got to go. *(Hangs up.)* Asshole. *(He pockets his phone, shrugs, shakes it off. Then.)* My apologies. I regret the unusual hour. Not regret, you don't really regret anything, guy's a pawn, you don't give a shit what he thinks. So what it's four in the morning. That's when you come to life. *(Then.)* I regret the unusual hour. It could not be helped. *(The lights change. Jake looks up at the booth.)* Is somebody up there? Roxanne, are you up there?

ROXANNE. *(Behind him.)* No no I'm here. I think Laura's up there. Laura, are you up there? *(She enters from backstage, carrying a script and some props, which she sets on a table. Jake looks at her, then.)* I couldn't find the prop gun. You don't have it, do you?

JAKE. No, there was some guy here. A janitor or something. He has it.

ROXANNE. There is no janitor scheduled to be in the building. *(Calling to the booth.)* Can we have more lights on the stage? Laura! Are you up there? Thank you.

JAKE. Some total fruitcake I thought he was a janitor and he was on the stage, yakking up a storm and he had the gun.

ROXANNE. He has it? (*More lights pop on the stage. Calling.*) Laura, can you call security, ask for Jimmy or Stu. There's someone in the theatre who is stealing props. (*Then to Jake, while dialing her own cell.*) What a nightmare. It's not exactly the easiest thing in the world to pick up a prop gun anymore. You practically have to sign your life away. (*On cell.*) Hey, it's Roxanne, at the theatre, could you call me? We have a situation. (*Hangs up.*) Let's go through this. What did he look like?

JAKE. I don't know. He was kind of a skinny guy, maybe not skinny, but you know. Kind of ... I don't know. Brown hair. Or gray maybe? Maybe thirty or so? Fifty? Yeah, like fifty. Or forty. Thirty.

ROXANNE. (*Yelling.*) Laura, do not call security. Those guys will just eat up the whole day and charge us double overtime and for what?

JAKE. How am I supposed to know? He was waving a gun at me! (*The lights shift radically.*)

ROXANNE. Laura, what are you doing? LAURA. Oh forget it. Anyway if you don't remember what he looks like —

JAKE. I remember, I was just trying to be specific.

ROXANNE. Well when you specifically remember then we'll call security, okay?

JAKE. I'm sorry, was that sarcasm?

ROXANNE. Sarcasm in show business? (*Roxanne's cell rings.*)

CELL PHONE. CELL PHONE.

JAKE. Not me.

ROXANNE. (*Realizing.*) Oh. Sorry. It's me. (*Answering.*) Hi, it's Roxanne. No, there's just a potential issue around one of the props that I'm in the process of clearing up. No he hasn't shown up yet. Not a problem. No, Dean, I'm sure. No worries. Thanks. (*Hangs up.*) OKAY LAURA WE'RE GOING TO HAVE TO DO A SEARCH OF THE ENTIRE THEATRE.

HARRY. Hello? (*Behind them, Harry appears in the door. He holds the gun out. As he steps onto the stage, Jake sees him and wrestles the gun from his hand. Roxanne watches from the side.*)

JAKE. He's got the gun. He's got the gun! Give me that!

HARRY. Sorry. I was back in the dressing rooms, I was looking for, because they told me they actually didn't tell me much ...

JAKE. Whatever, man. I don't know what you're doing here, but like this is a private rehearsal space so you're not allowed in here, okay?

ROXANNE. Harry.

HARRY. (*Overlap.*) No I know, I know, I just — I am, they told me to — the greenroom, but then no one was there, so —

ROXANNE. (*Overlap.*) Harry. Harry. (*He turns to see her, surprised.*)

HARRY. Roxanne!

ROXANNE. What are you doing here, Harry?

HARRY. Roxanne. Wow. You're you're you're different. Your hair —

ROXANNE. When did you get back?

HARRY. Get back from where?

ROXANNE. From when you left.

HARRY. Oh. From when I left.

ROXANNE. Yes. From when you left.

HARRY. Oh from then, from then I got back a long time ago.

ROXANNE. I know that.

HARRY. You know what?

ROXANNE. I know when you got back, Harry.

HARRY. You do?

ROXANNE. Why yes.

HARRY. Okay. Well, that's fine then.

ROXANNE. Is it?

HARRY. (*Flustered.*) Yes. And what are you doing here?

ROXANNE. I'm the stage manager.

HARRY. You're the stage manager. You're the stage manager. Wow. Isn't that, well ...

ROXANNE. Yes, and why are you here?

HARRY. I'm the understudy.

ROXANNE. (*Stunned.*) Really?

HARRY. Yes.

ROXANNE. (*Recovering.*) Your name is not on the call sheet, Harry. According to the call sheet this is an understudy rehearsal for an understudy, an understudy by the name of Robert Merrill who has been cast as the understudy in this part.

HARRY. I changed my name.

ROXANNE. Well, that's a problem.

HARRY. Is it?

ROXANNE. A change of name is a serious event. Do you have documentation that supports your claim?

HARRY. You mean like legal documents?

ROXANNE. You have documents that are not legal?

HARRY. I don't have any documents at all. I just ... started to do it.

ROXANNE. You just “started” to change your name? And you didn’t think anyone would care or notice?

JAKE. Actually people do it all the time in this business. Like, Bruce? That’s not his real name.

ROXANNE. (*Sharp.*) Yes thank you Jake for the sociological perspective on lives in show business but I think our situation is a little more serious here!

HARRY. Is it?

ROXANNE. How can you prove you are who you say you are? You stand there, answering to the name of Harry, but in fact you also claim to be this Robert Merrill person!

HARRY. Are you mad at me?

ROXANNE. Why would I be mad at you? It is a simple fact that I need to have proof that you are who you say you are.

HARRY. Well, I have an Equity card.

ROXANNE. An Equity card. Isn’t that handy. Might I see said Equity card?

HARRY. Might you what?

ROXANNE. Show it to me! (*He digs into his pocket and gets out a loose handful of cards. She looks at it. Looks at him.*) You could have stolen this.

HARRY. Who would steal an Equity card?

JAKE. Boy, ain’t that the truth. A SAG card, maybe.

ROXANNE. I’ll Xerox it and give it back to you later. (*She puts it in her binder.*)

HARRY. Okay. So. You’re a stage manager. Wow. When did that happen?

ROXANNE. We don’t really have a lot of time to go through personal history right now, Harry. Excuse me. “Robert.”

HARRY. You can call me Harry. People still do.

ROXANNE. Wonderful! This is all just ... wonderful. (*Beat.*)

JAKE. So you guys know each other?

ROXANNE. No.

HARRY. Yes.

ROXANNE. No. No. No. No. No ... Okay, Yes. (*Hostile.*) This is Harry. Jake. Harry, this is Jake.

HARRY. Yeah, we met just before.

JAKE. Hey. Yeah, hey. (*To Roxanne, sotto voce.*) Okay so wait, though. This guy’s the understudy?

ROXANNE. Apparently.

JAKE. (*Quiet, aside.*) Look, I’m gonna — I need to talk to my agent about this.

ROXANNE. (*Snapping.*) You don’t have approvals on the understudies, Jake!

JAKE. He’s covering me, though.

ROXANNE. Yes he is covering you and you are covering Bruce is my understanding of the arrangements that were made regarding the understudy situation.

JAKE. So if Bruce is out I go on for him and he goes on for me?

HARRY. Is there a problem?

ROXANNE. No. No problem.

JAKE. I have to talk to my agent.

ROXANNE. You don’t have approvals! Bruce doesn’t even have approvals!

JAKE. Bruce doesn’t?

ROXANNE. Not on understudies!

JAKE. Yeah, I know, but I mean — no offense, man — but we’re not like — come on, help me out here. (*They stare at him.*) Okay. This play is like a major event. You know? Kafka’s undiscovered masterpiece. On Broadway? I mean, we made it to Broadway on the strength of — plus the reviews, which I think we can rightly be proud of. People say movie stars aren’t welcome on Broadway, I think we put that rumor to rest.

HARRY. People say what?

ROXANNE. What’s your point, Jake?

HARRY. Because all I see are movie stars movie stars movie stars it’s like a disease. Not a disease. I didn’t mean “disease.” Maybe more like “pathology.” Or “ongoing cultural disaster.”

JAKE. Yeah okay. Let me put it this way then. Bruce and I, there’s a level of visibility and shall we say “excitement,” people are excited to see us. They come to the theatre and they’re excited to see me and Bruce. You? I’m guessing not so much. ‘Cause as far as I can tell? We don’t even know what your name is.

HARRY. Harry.

ROXANNE. Robert Merrill.

HARRY. Most people still call me Harry.

JAKE. Which would be my point.

HARRY. So is that like on your resume? “Visibility”?

JAKE. I’m not nobody, pal.

HARRY. I should say not. I saw your last picture. Just last week.

It was awesome. When you yelled "Get in the truck" I was like —
JAKE. Yeah, okay.

HARRY. I mean it. You said it like three times, too, right? "Get in the truck! Get in the truck! Get in the truck!"

JAKE. Okay, I'm not going to answer that but I am going to point out that that thing grossed sixty-seven million dollars its opening weekend, which is something that didn't make anybody too miserable, particularly not the producers of this play. But that's not actually what I'm talking about. I'm talking about Kafka's VISION of a world that's gone so far down the road into existential shame and anxiety that the self can't even regenerate a sense of being in the face of, buildings collapsing the whole culture can't even GENERATE because of this intangible decay that's just — huge in this, I mean really really HUGE, and if there's not some some some stature —

HARRY. OH, stature, I see —

JAKE. Yeah. Stature. It seems to me —

HARRY. So you think I'm not tall enough for the part?

JAKE. Roxanne —

ROXANNE. I wasn't at the auditions, Jake; I don't know what they were looking for. If it will make you feel better I can put a call into Dean and find out what their thinking was.

JAKE. Can you do that?

ROXANNE. Absolutely. *(She dials her phone.)*

HARRY. Look — this is appalling. I show up for the first day of rehearsal and the first thing I —

JAKE. The first thing you do is steal the prop gun and piss off the stage manager.

ROXANNE. Hi, Dean? It's Roxanne.

HARRY. The first thing I do is make it through the auditions, and get myself cast!

ROXANNE. Yes, the understudy just showed up.

JAKE. Forget I said anything. I'm sure you're a terrific actor.

ROXANNE. Jake had a question about what the thinking was.

HARRY. I'm a working actor. I WORK. I've been in, I can't even count the number of plays I've been in, over the past —

JAKE. That's awesome, man, I mean —

HARRY. *Law and Order.* I played a recurring judge, I did Chekhov at Williamstown last year with with — some of the best some really fine actors —

ROXANNE. Uh-huh.

JAKE. Really, that's great.

HARRY. And I don't, usually I would not agree to even consider standing by for someone —

JAKE. Yeah, maybe that's my point. Someone as good as you are, why would you need to be taking a job as an understudy? *(Beat. Harry looks at him.)*

HARRY. It's a terrific part.

JAKE. Don't I know it, you're understudying me!

ROXANNE. I see.

HARRY. And you're standing by for Bruce, huh? So then you're an understudy, too.

JAKE. Hardly.

HARRY. Not hardly. Exactly.

JAKE. Roxanne!

HARRY. I'm the understudy and you're the other understudy. That's exactly the situation, as I understand it.

JAKE. Roxanne! Where are we at with this?

ROXANNE. Okay yeah, okay. Thanks, Dean, that helps a lot. G'day. *(Hangs up.)* He's best friends with Dean's hairstylist.

JAKE. His hairstylist?

ROXANNE. Not his hairstylist. His wife's hairstylist.

JAKE. His wife's hairstylist?

ROXANNE. That is what I was told. Dean's wife goes to this hairstylist who also knows Harry, and she told her how terrific Harry was and that's how he got the audition, and she wanted to do a favor for this person.

JAKE. The hairstylist or the wife?

ROXANNE. Dean's wife wanted to do a favor for her hairstylist. They're very close apparently.

JAKE. That's how he got the job?

HARRY. I auditioned is how I got the job!

JAKE. This is a crazy business.

ROXANNE. Yes it is. Look, he's never going on. Equity requires us to have someone standing by, but he will never go on.

JAKE. Whatever.

ROXANNE. *(Calling.)* Laura, could you bring on the bedroom for scene one?

JAKE. So how do you two know each other?

HARRY. Well. We don't really know each other all that well. We knew each other a little bit like what ...

ROXANNE. (*Calling.*) We'll be marking it at first, so worklights is fine.

HARRY. Six years or something. Is that how long it's been? Six years?

ROXANNE. Excuse me but I'm prepping. I have work to do. Is that all right with you? That I prep the stage so that you and your fellow actor can rehearse the scene? Is it? Is it?

HARRY. Yes?

ROXANNE. Good. LAURA. THE BEDROOM!!!! (*She looks up at the booth; lights start to shift.*) Laura, we don't need the light cue, we need the wagons! Fuck me! (*She takes the ghost light off. Jake looks at Harry.*)

JAKE. So, you changed your name, huh?

HARRY. Yeah.

JAKE. Why'd you do that?

HARRY. Oh just a little, you know shake things up.

JAKE. Like shake-up, what were you trying to shake up? (*The set starts to move around them, lights change.*)

HARRY. Boy the set on this is really something isn't it? Who's the designer?

JAKE. You don't know who designed the set?

HARRY. No, of course I know who designed the set. Just making conversation.

JAKE. That's what I thought I was doing when I asked you why you changed your name.

ROXANNE. (*Reentering.*) Laura. The bedroom — Laura. Not the inn. Laura. Oh for god's sake LAURA. (*But the inn is in place.*)

JAKE. There a problem?

ROXANNE. Laura's just having a bad day apparently. (*Deliberate, into headset.*) Laura, take out the inn and bring in the bedroom please. (*A bar moves into place.*) Oh for crying out loud. Okay

FINE. We'll start with the inn and go back, Jake are you okay with that?

JAKE. Sure, chief, I love this scene.

ROXANNE. Good. Harry, when the lights come up you're at the table; Jake you start at the bar —

JAKE. I know where I start, I mean I've been watching Bruce do this eight times a week.

ROXANNE. Yes of course. Sorry. I realize that. I just uh — okay. Let's do this. Harry, you need a line I'll be on book. (*She starts for*

the house.)

JAKE. So you guys never said how you knew each other.

ROXANNE. We were engaged to be married. (*She stalks off the set. Jake looks at Harry.*)

HARRY. It's a long story.

JAKE. I bet.

ROXANNE. (*Snarling.*) Jake you need to start at the bar, please!

JAKE. You got it, chief. (*To Harry.*) So you know much about Kafka? (*He goes to the bar and starts to set it up with bottles.*)

HARRY. Oh, sure.

JAKE. (*Yelling.*) GLASSWARE is there GLASSWARE ... Because he was like such an incredible genius. I mean the language in this thing, you get a chance to look at the script?

HARRY. Well, when I was memorizing the lines I glanced through it —

JAKE. No, I know, but there's a lot of nuance that people don't — because, like, this section, like, this takes place in a scene where he's exploring some of the social territory that he was writing about in *The Castle*, you know, there's a kind of existential overlap with that text? And it helps to know or just even sense, like a heartbeat, buh boom, the unspoken terror that underlines the spatial relationships in the stage picture. And beyond. Thanks, Roxanne. (*Roxanne runs across the stage with glasses. He takes the glassware from her.*) Because the Castle — like, the Muirs, the first translators, they were like, and I'm not blaming them, Max Brod led them in the wrong direction if you ask me, but they truly saw the Castle as like this image of divine grace! (*He laughs at this.*) Can you believe that? So anyway their translation just doesn't have the quality of disaster, the impending catastrophe 'cause if you ask me, the Castle is like, it's death, man. It's time itself. It's the Nazis bearing down. Divine grace? I don't think so.

HARRY. Wow.

JAKE. That's my point. It really helps to have a sense of the universe according to Kafka.

HARRY. Well, I've been to Prague on a pub crawl.

JAKE. Awesome. I bet that was a blast.

ROXANNE. (*Calling.*) Okay we're going to try this without lights and sound — (*Music comes up. The lights shift.*) No, Laura we're just marking this for now until Harry gets a — LAURA. LAURA. Oh fuck it. Just do it okay you guys? (*She stalks offstage.*)

JAKE. Not a problem. Not a problem. (*The lights shift again as*

Harry and Jake consider each other in the tap room of a gloomy medieval pub. They stare at each other for a long time, and then a longer time.) It's your cue, dude.

HARRY. I know, I was acting.

JAKE. Oh. Sorry. Sorry man, that was just a huge pause. You could drive a truck through that pause.

HARRY. I was getting into character.

JAKE. Sure. Sorry. *(Another long pause. Jake makes a face out to the house.)*

ROXANNE. *(Calling.)* Are you in character yet, Harry?

HARRY. Just a minute. *(Beat.)* Yes.

ROXANNE. Then can we go please?

HARRY. Absolutely. *(He looks at Jake, smiles.)* Hello, friend.

JAKE. Friend? You use the word freely.

HARRY. I use it as I have been instructed by Karlsman.

JAKE. Come come have a drink. *(He sets a glass in front of Harry and pours a large sloppy shot.)*

HARRY. I am here on Karlsman's orders to take down your testimony.

JAKE. Yes of course.

HARRY. — And I warn you it will go harshly with you if you try to deceive the judicial authorities on this or any matter.

JAKE. Drink first. *(Harry goes to the wall, opens it and takes out a huge old-fashioned tape recorder. He sets it on the table and talks as he sets it up.)*

HARRY. We commence questioning on the third night of the full moon in the winter months that would never again be the same —

JAKE. *(Overlap, pointing to the drink.)* No I mean —

HARRY. — never after you went back to look at the ruins of a childhood —

JAKE. You drink the — hey —

HARRY. *(Overlap, ignoring him.)* — marred by a mother's wail on the first and only time you asked dared to ask why she had no face why the face that turned on you each dawn was not a face at all, but nothing more than an empty mask of blood and bones —

JAKE. *(Silencing him finally.)* Whoa whoa whoa whoa. WHOA.

WHOA. Hey. HEY. Time out! Time fucking out! *(Harry stops. A beat.)*

HARRY. Is there a problem?

JAKE. No there's no problem. You just missed your cue. You have to drink. You take the drink, you down it, and then you go get the

tape recorder.

HARRY. Oh, I didn't think — do I have to take the drink? *(He looks out in the house, questioning.)*

JAKE. What do you mean do you have to take the drink of course you have to take the drink.

HARRY. I just thought, it doesn't really make sense, to take a drink —

JAKE. It's how it's written. You drink, you down it, like it's a shot of tequila, and then you get the tape recorder.

HARRY. The script doesn't actually say that.

JAKE. It's exactly what the script says. Kafka says drink then tape recorder.

HARRY. It doesn't make sense to me.

JAKE. It's fucking hilarious.

HARRY. *(Out.)* Do I have to do it like that?

JAKE. Okay, look —

HARRY. I just want to clarify process a little bit with the stage manager if that's all right with you —

JAKE. *(Also out.)* Roxanne, could you come talk to him? I mean, this is bullshit. This play is a hit, it's a fucking Kafka hit, and he's like —

HARRY. No no, honestly this truly is a point of clarification —

JAKE. — what is this a pissing contest we haven't even made it through half a scene!

HARRY. Not at all not at all I'm just trying to stay clear on process, that's all I'm doing. Really. *(Roxanne comes up on the stage, goes immediately to Jake.)*

JAKE. Roxanne.

ROXANNE. I totally get it Jake; I absolutely do.

JAKE. You tell me I don't have approvals I'm fine. You tell me he got the job because he knows some hairstylist I'm less fine but I'm —

HARRY. I got the job because I gave a great audition!

JAKE. Roxanne —

ROXANNE. I know I know. Why don't you just give me a minute with Harry and then we'll get this back on track.

JAKE. I mean is he any good?

HARRY. Look, I know that I'm being asked to "recreate" a performance, I just think —

ROXANNE. Harry, could you give me a minute, please? *(To Jake.)* This is what I need you to do, Jake. Take ten minutes. Get yourself a cup of coffee, make some phone calls, and come back in ten

minutes and when you come back, we'll be ready to work.
JAKE. Yeah, because —
ROXANNE. You don't have to say another word. It's done.
JAKE. It better be. *(He looks at her; looks at Harry, shakes his head and goes. There is a sheepish moment of silence.)*
HARRY. Okay.
ROXANNE. What are you, a fucking moron?
HARRY. I think I'm well within my rights —
ROXANNE. You have no rights! You're an actor! You're not even an actor, you're an understudy!
HARRY. Okay. Okay.
ROXANNE. You listen to me. You moron — *(A pause. suddenly losing it.)* Why did they cast you?! Why did they have to cast YOU?! Why didn't I see this coming?! Why did I have no warning?! SHIT. What on earth can the universe be trying to teach me, by having you, YOU, show up? Don't answer that. Do not say anything. It will be very bad for you, very bad, if you even try to have a conversation with me. Do you understand that?
HARRY. Okay obviously there's still some bad feelings around this.
ROXANNE. *(Getting a grip.)* No. No bad feelings. You are out of my system. I'm over you. Okay? Okay? Okay?
HARRY. I just —
ROXANNE. No.
HARRY. Going to, um — leaving, in general —
ROXANNE. Harry I will hurt you.
HARRY. Was perhaps drastic. That's all I will say.
ROXANNE. Fantastic. *(A breath.)* Okay. Now that we've got that squared away, can I ask you something?
HARRY. Sure.
ROXANNE. Are you a fucking moron? Do you think it's really a good idea to piss off the star of the show you're in rehearsal for, as an understudy, within the first ten minutes of rehearsal?
HARRY. I thought "Bruce" was the star.
ROXANNE. They're both stars, Harry. Jake's right. Nobody cried around here, when his movie did sixty-seven million dollars worth of business on its opening weekend.
HARRY. Did you see it though? God it was awful.
ROXANNE. I didn't see it.
HARRY. Hilarious. "Get in the truck! Get down, get down!" Sixty-seven million dollars?

ROXANNE. That's right, sixty-seven million dollars.
HARRY. Well, I don't care how much money it made. It's awful. And he's terrible in it!
ROXANNE. As your stage manager I'm going to have to ask you to keep your opinions about popular culture to yourself.
HARRY. Whatever.
ROXANNE. No. Don't say "whatever." Say, "I will keep my opinions about popular culture to myself, Roxanne."
HARRY. I will keep my opinions about popular culture to myself, Roxanne.
ROXANNE. And do you think you can just do the scene the way it's written?
HARRY. Well, it's not actually written that he takes a drink. You know that is not, Kafka did not write that.
ROXANNE. Kafka's dead! We got a dead playwright here and a live movie star so if the movie star says that it is in the script that you drink before you move? That is what it says in the script.
HARRY. Well, I —
ROXANNE. No. No "well!" Just "Yes, Roxanne!"
HARRY. So what you're saying is there's no creativity, there's no —
ROXANNE. What I'm saying is, you will do what I tell you to do, or I will call my producers right now on this cell phone right here in my hand, and tell them that you are not working out, that I don't give a shit about his wife's hairstylist and how much she LIKES YOU because you pissed Jake off too much and we have to go to the next person on the list for this job.
HARRY. Well that's seems extreme.
ROXANNE. That's right it is extreme and I'll do it you lunatic!
HARRY. And it's not about ...
ROXANNE. About what? About what, Harry?
HARRY. There's no ...
ROXANNE. No what? "Baggage?" "Bad feelings about the past?" "Residual impulses to take revenge on the shithead who broke my heart?" There might be. Who can say. And you know what? If you do lose your job here, because you finally really piss me off, and those vague residual impulses get the better of me? You can run around New York and tell all our mutual friends that I had you fired, because I wasn't over you or I'm unhappy and bitter because I had to give up acting and become a stage manager just to stay employed, you can run around New York and say whatever you

want, but you know what? You'll STILL BE OUT OF A JOB. That is what will happen if you don't just do what I say.

HARRY. All right! I'll take the stupid drink. I didn't know it was so important to everyone.

ROXANNE. Okay good.

HARRY. Anything else I can do for you?

ROXANNE. Yes, there is one more thing. It's called "sucking up."

HARRY. I've heard of it.

ROXANNE. Good. Because there will now be some major sucking up.

HARRY. Okay. Fine. *(A beat, tender.)* You look beautiful. And I mean that.

ROXANNE. Not me! Jake! Sucking up to Jake!

HARRY. Oh come on!

ROXANNE. Is that a problem?

HARRY. I just —

ROXANNE. No "justs." Only sucking up.

HARRY. Roxanne, if I'm expected to act in scenes with him I have to have a point of view —

ROXANNE. No. We've been through this. You have no rights, which means you have no point of view. Jake is a movie star. That means he is crown prince of the universe.

HARRY. What about Bruce?

ROXANNE. Bruce is the King of Everything and Jake is the crown prince. Okay let's think of this as a play. Bruce is Richard the Third. Jake is Henry the Fifth. You are spear carrier number seven. Got it?

HARRY. Yes. I got it. *(Off her look.)* I got it!

ROXANNE. Good. Now, I'm going to go get Henry the Fifth, and we will continue with our exercise in artistic excellence. *(She goes. Harry sits alone for a moment. Then he raises his eyebrows at the audience.)*

HARRY. *(To audience, explaining.)* Stage managers are not usually that high-strung. Normally, in fact, the stage manager is the one person in the theatre you're supposed to be able to count on to keep her head. That's the job description: To always have six kinds of duct tape, a pencil sharpener, Band-Aids, and a cool head. Which, I'm not saying, okay. This is certainly not an optimal situation. That I would just show up like this after so much time and some admittedly unfortunate personal history, without any notice? Of course she would be rattled; anyone would be. So I think we

should agree to overlook for now what might be considered by some to be a lack of professionalism on her part. *(He takes the glass, mimes downing a drink, sets the drink down, and goes to the door, picks up the tape recorder and puts it on the table. Thinks.)* Does that seem funny to you? I can't believe taking the drink before getting the tape recorder would actually get a laugh. I mean, I have watched the show several times and he does get a laugh there but honestly I just didn't think it was all that funny. Not that I'm above a laugh, I am not one of those actors by any means. I worked with this one guy, once — this is a true story — we were in this hilarious comedy, the thing was foolproof and everything this guy did laid an egg. Seriously. I name no names but it was like he was sabotaging the entire production, and the director finally said, "You know is there a problem here?" And he said, I kid you not, "I just don't feel the need to beg for every laugh that's out there. I've gotten enough laughs in my life; I don't need any more." That's what he said! "I don't need ..." *(Harry takes a drink, makes a face, sets the drink down. He does it again, a different, bigger face. He does it a third time, chokes on the alcohol, has to hit himself on the chest to stop himself from choking. Looks at the audience.)* Is that funny? I don't think it's funny; I just think it's mugging. I know he gets a laugh there, but I don't think it's a good laugh. It's not a bad laugh, it's just ... Not that as I said anyone should be above a laugh. Especially in Kafka. *(He takes another drink, chokes, clutches his chest, clutches the chair, falls to the floor and ends up collapsing in a heap, in a spectacular bit of mugging. He lays there for a moment.)* Well that's just not funny at all. I don't care what anyone says. *(Jake and Roxanne come back onstage.)*

ROXANNE. So we can take it from the top of the scene, or just pick it up from the drink; it's up to you, Jake.

JAKE. No, let's take it from ... *(They see Harry on the floor.)*

ROXANNE. Harry, what are you doing?

HARRY. Just working on the scene.

JAKE. There's no lying on the floor. *(Upset again.)* There's no lying on the floor in this scene!

ROXANNE. Harry. There is no lying on the floor in this scene. Is that understood?

HARRY. Yeah, no, of course. I was just trying something.

JAKE. Okay ...

ROXANNE. There is no trying things! *(To Jake.)* I swear to you,

Jake, I told him — I'm calling the producers right now, Harry.
HARRY. No no no I won't I won't I didn't mean I was trying anything. I meant, I was thinking about the play and how great it was, I was just like meditating about that, that's why I was lying on the floor. *(He stands and brushes himself off. They look at him. Jake considers how he is going to respond, then.)*
JAKE. Whatever, man. Let's just do this.
ROXANNE. Great! Thank you, Jake. You are a prince. And Harry knows that. *(Calling.)* Laura we're going to take it from the top of the scene, all right? *(The lights shift and music comes up loud.)* No — no we don't need the light cue or the sound, Laura — Laura we have a lot to get through today and I need you to pay attention. *(One of the walls starts to fly out.)*
JAKE. Whoa!
ROXANNE. No no! Laura! Come on! Wait — oh for god's sake — I don't want to have to come up there! Are you listening to a word I am saying? *(For now the back wall is out and another wall, with a huge bank of windows, is coming in.)*
JAKE. Ai yi yi. Roxanne, maybe I should come back in fifteen minutes after you sort this thing out. I think I need to call my agent.
ROXANNE. No. There will be no agent calling. I am taking care of this. *(Calling.)* Laura! I am coming up there! Stay there! *(She goes. Harry and Jake look at each other, uncomfortable.)*
HARRY. She's great.
JAKE. Awesome. The best.
HARRY. Yeah.
JAKE. So, you two ...
HARRY. It was a long time ago.
JAKE. What happened? You dump her or what?
HARRY. It's very complicated.
JAKE. But you walked out.
HARRY. Well, I didn't walk out, per se, I more or less you know I got on an airplane and ... took a trip.
JAKE. Wow. You have like a commitment thing or you know you just didn't love her and you didn't want to hurt her so you couldn't even bring yourself to tell her?
HARRY. *(Offended.)* Is that what she said? Did she tell you that?
JAKE. No, man. It's what I heard over the loudspeakers in the dressing rooms.
HARRY. *(Thinking, then laughing, uncomfortable.)* So you heard,

wow. What else did you hear?
JAKE. You mean did I hear the part where you said I'm a terrible actor? Yeah, I heard that.
HARRY. Oh, see what I meant by terrible is not what you think I meant by ...
JAKE. It's okay, Mr. Spear Carrier. I'm an adult. People assume movie stars are all assholes; it's not necessarily the case. But I do, Harry, I got to ask you — theoretically — do you really think "Get in the truck" is somehow a lesser thing for an actor to say, than oh, say — "Please sit down, Mr. Karlsman?"
HARRY. No — no —
JAKE. Answer the question.
HARRY. Well, I do think —
JAKE. Go ahead, let me have it.
HARRY. I just think that — at least "Please sit down, Mr. Karlsman" at least that eventually leads to something dramatically interesting.
JAKE. "Get in the truck" leads to us escaping the monster tornado that is wiping out, like, all of Kansas. And then we live to you know eventually defeat the thing and save thousands of innocent Kansans from sure and utter destruction. How is that not dramatic?
HARRY. Yeah, but I found that aspect of it totally unrealistic.
JAKE. Kafka's realistic?
HARRY. Kafka's poetic.
JAKE. Okay, you got me. That movie was not long on poetry. But the women were hot, huh? *(After a moment, Harry nods fully in agreement about the hotness of the women. Yelling.)* Roxanne, where we at with this?
ROXANNE. *(On loudspeaker.)* Laura are you in the house?
JAKE. She's not up there with you?
ROXANNE. *(A beat, again on loudspeaker.)* I can't find Laura.
JAKE. Well she's not down here!
HARRY. Is it always like this?
JAKE. Do not start on her. She is an awesome stage manager, and you don't have any traction here. When you enter this territory you are a giant bug, my friend, and I mean that literally. You say anything mean about Roxanne? You are an insect. *(Yelling.)* You get all that, Roxanne?
ROXANNE. *(On loudspeaker.)* Yes, thank you, Jake.
JAKE. *(Yelling.)* You want, we can go with the trial scene. You

know I love this scene.

ROXANNE. *(On loudspeaker.)* That might be best. I'm taking the tavern wagon out and bringing the law table on, and then I'm coming down. *(The bar starts to move out, and a large table moves in on the other side of the stage. There is a large book on it, as well as a few glasses and an inkpot and quill pen.)*

JAKE. This is one of the best scenes in the play. Well, it's hard to pick favorites. But you know, this section? It's like he was on fire. Things really start to cook. *(The table is in place.)* Man I love this set. See the castle looming? Gorgeous, right? It just says Kafka to me. *Castle. Trial. Kafka!* All we need is like a giant bug in the middle of it, we'd be — oh! And we have a giant bug!

HARRY. Okay, okay —

JAKE. Just giving you a hard time. *(He goes to the book, opens it, adjusts it and the other props on the table. Roxanne enters, examines the prop table, carrying her script with the blocking in it.)*

ROXANNE. Okay you guys I am really sorry about this. I don't know where Laura went, and she somehow locked half the board but not the other half, fucking stoner, so unless today is going to be a total wash we're just going to have to start here, and backtrack to act one, then do act three last. Or we can do two, three and then go back to one.

JAKE. Fine by me.

HARRY. We will have a chance to run it straight through eventually, right?

ROXANNE. If you're still with us, yes, you will have the opportunity to run the show once through with Jake. Alright let's just take a second to review the blocking. Harry you start the scene stage right of the interrogation table. Jake is off. You need to take some time — not forever; you're in a three hour play by Franz Kafka, don't milk the moment — start your line about Karlsman and the paperwork, Jake enters, he sits down, you sit down and he reads the changes, you're doing what you're told, try to imagine what that might like feel like. *(They start to follow her instructions in a kind of casual, keystone cops sort of way.)* You're enraged, talk talk talk about the charges, talk talk talk about Karlsman talk talk talk, you try to get to the door, Jake talk talk talk about the magistrate. Jake exit. Storm brewing outside, if Laura ever shows up again we'll have sounds and lights. Can we try that much?

JAKE. Good. Awesome. I love this scene. *(He stretches, like a runner,*

speaks to Harry.) You ready?

HARRY. Absolutely.

ROXANNE. I'll be in the house on book.

JAKE. *(Bobbing like a boxer now.)* Yes! Yes! Yes! *(Harry rolls his eyes at this, but sits properly at the table, as Jake goes offstage left. Lights shift.)*

ROXANNE. Oh good, Laura! Good! Nice to have you with us! Carry on. *(There is a small pause while Harry looks about, increasingly fidgety.)*

HARRY. *(Performing, he's good.)* This is ludicrous. How long have I been here? Karlsman said it would take only minutes and I've already spent half the day here. The paperwork was in order. *(Jake enters, crosses to the table, puts a pile of papers on the table, and looks at Harry.)* Well, thank goodness. I have been waiting half a day! Perhaps we can get this over with and I can go back to work now! *(Harry reaches for the top paper. Jake puts his hand on top of it.)*

JAKE. You are not to touch that. *(He hits Harry's hand.)*

HARRY. Oooow. Are you going to do it that hard?

JAKE. I hardly touched you.

HARRY. It hurt.

JAKE. Come on.

HARRY. No, it really did.

JAKE. Well, I can't just like give you a little nancy tap; the guy is serious; you're not supposed to be touching that.

HARRY. A "nancy tap"?

JAKE. Come on.

ROXANNE. *(Impatient.)* Could we take it back, please?

JAKE. *(Obedient.)* You are not to touch that. *(He smacks Harry's hand even harder. Harry takes his hand away, nursing it, making a bit too big of a deal out of it, but continuing with the scene.)*

HARRY. I beg your pardon. Who are you?

JAKE. I am Mr. Klam. Why are you in here? *(The scene gets better and better as they play it more fully.)*

HARRY. Those useless underlings in the outer office told me to wait here. I am Inspector K, I brought in the criminal this morning.

JAKE. You brought in the criminal?

HARRY. Yes. On Karlsman's orders.

JAKE. Karlsman said nothing about it to me.

HARRY. Why am I being held here? Why can I not leave! I have work to do! They will be wondering where I am!

JAKE. You are under arrest, surely you know that.

HARRY. I am not under arrest. I am the arresting officer.
JAKE. Who told you that?
HARRY. It is my position!
JAKE. Do you have papers? The magistrate will insist on seeing your papers.
HARRY. I would like to speak with Karlsman.
JAKE. (*Kind.*) He does not know you. He will never know you again.
HARRY. I must speak with someone!
JAKE. Why are you angry with me? As you see, I am a lowly employee in this matter. You performed as you were asked in your position, while you had it, you made the arrest, and delivered the criminal to the authorities. Now your situation has changed. If you're looking for sympathy, you have it my friend, but answers are elusive and contradictory and I do not traffic in anything so ephemeral. Accept your fate, my friend. There is nothing anyone can do.
HARRY. (*Frightened.*) I do not accept that.
JAKE. (*Quiet.*) Then it will be the worse for you. (*They stare at each other. Harry looks at the stack of papers. He touches it, frightened, takes a step away. Jake watches him, with compassion.*)
ROXANNE. That's you, Harry.
HARRY. I'm sorry, I just was overwhelmed. I had a complete sense memory of this thing, this exact same thing happened to me in a casting office. Suddenly no one knew me and I wasn't on a list and the casting agent wouldn't see me and I was just like a pariah.
JAKE. They wouldn't see you?
HARRY. No, this girl — I don't know who she was — she was just an assistant and she was hideous, she acted like I was — I don't know what she thought — that I was crashing the audition, someone trying to force his way in, and I kept saying no, they called me in, and she was just, you're not on the list, there's nothing I can do, no I'm not phoning the casting agent NO ONE WILL SEE YOU YOU DON'T EXIST.
JAKE. She said that? "You don't exist?"
HARRY. Yes. Those exact words. "No one will see you. You don't exist."
JAKE. Dude, that sounds awful.
HARRY. It was horrible.
JAKE. This business sucks. But how about Kafka? He's one hell of a playwright, huh? I mean that was awesome what you did, your first time through it? I was blown away, man.

HARRY. No, no, I was just kind of marking it.
JAKE. Well, if that was marking, then I'm like a fucking joke because I thought it was awesome. And I should know, I've been doing the part for months! But you were really good. (*Out.*) Wasn't he good?
ROXANNE. (*Offstage.*) Wonderful.
HARRY. Thank you, but I was totally just working off what you were giving me —
JAKE. (*Overlapping.*) — yeah yeah yeah —
HARRY. — That was electrifying.
JAKE. Thanks, man. Like I said I liked you, too. (*Beat.*) So you want us to just keep going?
ROXANNE. Yes, please.
HARRY. (*Calling to Roxanne.*) The gun part's next, right? 'Cause I don't have the gun.
ROXANNE. Oh god above, we're missing the gun again? Who had the gun? Laura! That would be just my luck. (*Panicking a little.*) Laura you don't have the prop gun, do you? Can you answer me, Laura!
JAKE. I had it. After he took it? Remember I took it back? I had it.
ROXANNE. Well where is it, Jake.
JAKE. I don't know, I think I left it in my dressing room. I'll go get it.
ROXANNE. No, no, you stay here. I don't want anyone else getting lost in the bowels of the theatre. Practice something. (*She goes to get the gun.*)
HARRY. You know, I meant what I said. About your acting.
JAKE. Surprised you, huh? The action star can actually pull it out?
HARRY. Well, you know, you can't really tell anything from those movies. In between explosions there's not a lot of room for — subtlety.
JAKE. You're a snob.
HARRY. I'm not a snob. I'm an understudy. Come on, do it.
JAKE. Do what?
HARRY. (*Mouthing.*) "Get in the truck."
JAKE. You want me to do it? (*Harry nods. After a moment — full out.*) GET IN THE TRUCK! (*It is awesome.*)
HARRY. That's good. That is, it's good. (*Jake grins; they both know it's ridiculous and thrilling.*)
JAKE. Why are you doing this, man? You're a real actor. Roxanne is right. There's like no chance you'll ever go on. You know that, don't you?

HARRY. I might go on.

JAKE. Dude, you might go on, and the entire audience might ask for their money back.

HARRY. There might be a few people out there who are coming to see a first-rate production of Kafka on Broadway.

JAKE. Yeah, nobody cares about those people. They care about all those other people coming in on buses from New Jersey. And trust me, THOSE people are coming to see me and Bruce.

HARRY. But what if Bruce gets sick and you have to go on for Bruce. Then I would go on for you.

JAKE. Bruce doesn't get sick.

HARRY. He might get sick. Or you might get sick and then I would go on for you.

JAKE. It's Broadway, nobody gets sick.

HARRY. Everybody gets sick.

JAKE. Nobody gets sick on Broadway. People leave shows. Bruce could leave the show, he could get mercury poisoning and leave the show, and then I would go on for him and they would cast some other movie star as me.

HARRY. So you wouldn't be you anymore, you would be Bruce.

JAKE. That's right.

HARRY. But I would still be me. I would still be the understudy.

JAKE. Yeah.

HARRY. So I might go on.

JAKE. You're not going on!

HARRY. I just don't choose to see it that way.

JAKE. Dude, it doesn't matter how you choose to see it.

HARRY. It matters to me.

JAKE. It doesn't matter to anyone else.

HARRY. If it doesn't matter, then I can choose what I want.

JAKE. You can choose what you want, but what you want is not your choice.

HARRY. You sound like Kafka now.

JAKE. Awesome. 'Cause he was really smart. *(Jake takes out a banana from the drawer and then a second, which he hands to Harry.)*

Don't tell Roxanne. She throws a fit when we eat the props.

HARRY. Bananas. That's right, the banana scene is coming up too.

JAKE. So why are you doing this? I mean basically they just pay you not to act, right? They pay you to learn the part and then just stand by?

HARRY. The operative part of that sentence being "pay me."

JAKE. You need the money.

HARRY. An actor who needs money. HmMMM. What a unique situation.

JAKE. Right? Right? *(He enjoys this. They eat their bananas.)*

HARRY. Is that why you did the "get in the truck" movie?

JAKE. I love that movie! I did it for artistic fulfillment, man! *(He laughs and eats his banana.)*

HARRY. Okay, just for curiosity's sake.

JAKE. Uh-huh.

HARRY. Just to make me feel a little nauseous, help me get into character for the rest of the scene —

JAKE. Yeaahhhh.

HARRY. How much.

JAKE. *(Working him.)* How much what.

HARRY. Come on.

JAKE. Two-point-three. Million.

HARRY. *(Shocked.)* Two-point-three million what? Pesos?

JAKE. Dollars.

HARRY. Two-point-three MILLION dollars? That's how much they paid you to make that terrible movie? Two-point-three million DOLLARS?

JAKE. It's not that much after agents and lawyers and taxes. You know, it doesn't go that far.

HARRY. It doesn't go far? It's millions of dollars! How could that not go far?

JAKE. It just doesn't. Keeping the whole machine going costs a lot of money, it doesn't, you know — honestly I'm kind of a bottom-basement movie star. Two-point-three million? That's actually a pretty lame quote. I kind of got that part because the CGI was going to cost a fortune so they were looking to save money and I was like the cheapest action star out there. Bruce, you want to know what Bruce gets?

HARRY. I don't know, do I?

JAKE. Twenty-two.

HARRY. Million. Twenty-two million DOLLARS? A movie? Like for one movie?

JAKE. Where have you been? Everybody in America knows that's his quote.

HARRY. And it doesn't matter that he's terrible?

JAKE. Dude — you know you can't say that right? Like, what if he was in the theatre?

HARRY. Well, I wouldn't say it if he was here. I'm not stupid.

JAKE. Yeah that's still up for debate because let me ask you this: What if he left something in his dressing room? Like his sweatshirt or something, what if he left his favorite sweatshirt, by mistake, in his dressing room, and he stopped by to pick it up. And he came in through the stage door because he's just going to run in and get it? And he heard you saying this shit over the loudspeakers. What if that happened.

HARRY. He has a favorite sweatshirt? Why doesn't he just buy another one, he makes twenty-two million dollars a movie.

JAKE. You make that much money you don't really buy things anymore.

HARRY. What do you mean you don't "buy" things?

JAKE. Well, I don't have that kind of money so I don't fully understand this from the inside. But you know, you don't "purchase" things. Things move different. When it gets that big, money — works — different. You know this.

HARRY. No I don't.

JAKE. You know, it like, floats. And then you float. It's all about meaning.

HARRY. Meaning?

JAKE. Meaning. Like yes, no. Words. Meaning.

HARRY. What about meaning?

JAKE. That's what I'm saying. The meaning changes.

HARRY. What are we talking about?

JAKE. Okay look. Meaning. This is a banana. Only it's not a banana, it's a prop.

HARRY. It's a prop AND a banana.

JAKE. Except to Bruce it's nothing. It doesn't exist. Bananas don't exist for him.

HARRY. Really?

JAKE. No. Guatemala exists, because he could BUY Guatemala, and then the percentage of the gross national product that consists of banana futures in Guatemala, that would exist for him. But this banana? Has no meaning.

HARRY. Do YOU have meaning?

JAKE. What are you talking about. Me? Of course I have meaning.

HARRY. Just not as much meaning.

JAKE. I have meaning!

HARRY. Not as much meaning as you'd have if you made twenty-two million a movie.

JAKE. I have more meaning than you.

HARRY. Oh me, please. I have like negative meaning. What is negative meaning? Can you have negative meaning? If you have negative meaning is it still meaning?

JAKE. You know who would know the answer to this? Kafka.

HARRY. Really, you think so?

JAKE. Have you read the play? That's what the play's about!

HARRY. You know I have to say I have read the play, but I don't understand the play.

JAKE. You don't understand the play?

HARRY. Do you understand the play?

JAKE. Absolutely.

HARRY. What's it about?

JAKE. It's about meaning. *(Roxanne enters with the prop gun and a jacket.)*

ROXANNE. You know, you might have mentioned that for one reason or another you decided to bury the prop gun under the sixteen tons of unwashed laundry you have so cleverly strewn about your dressing room, Jake.

JAKE. Oh — sorry — I set it down and then I was looking for this script I wanted to look at, so I moved a pile of stuff —

ROXANNE. That stuff would be your underwear. The prop gun was underneath your underwear!!! Used underwear.

JAKE. Oh man, Roxanne. I'm really sorry.

ROXANNE. I'm not talking to you right now. Oh. And what is this?

JAKE. *(Sheepish.)* Banana peels?

ROXANNE. You've been eating the props. You've just been sitting up here eating props!

HARRY. He told me it would be okay.

ROXANNE. *(Glaring at this.)* You know it's not okay. Actors. You suck. Everyone acts like oh you all can't help yourselves, you have to act like big fucking babies because that's just the way actors are well let me tell you something I don't believe it for one second. Harry, in this production, unless we're practicing a scene, we. Don't. Eat. The. Props. Even if Henry the Fifth tells us it's all right.

HARRY. It's not a prop, it's a banana.

ROXANNE. It's a banana and a prop.

HARRY. Not to Bruce. Bruce doesn't even know the banana exists. Did you know about this? That Bruce could buy Guatemala? Did you know that?

ROXANNE. Yes I did know that because I've been listening to you guys on the loudspeaker in the dressing room, Harry. Could we get back to work?

HARRY. Actually could I take a little break?

ROXANNE. You just had a little break. While I went and got the gun, you guys had a break.

HARRY. I need to pee.

ROXANNE. Why didn't you pee while I was getting the gun!

HARRY. I didn't think of it.

ROXANNE. How could you not think of it! You either have to pee or you don't!

HARRY. I was having an interesting conversation and eating a banana.

ROXANNE. Which you were not supposed to be DOING because it's a PROP.

HARRY. Look I really have to —

ROXANNE. Go go go.

HARRY. I'll be right back. *(He goes. Roxanne rolls her eyes and starts to throw away the bananas, reset the scene.)*

JAKE. You're pretty hard on him.

ROXANNE. Yes, well, it was hard on me, when he disappeared two weeks before we were supposed to walk down the fucking aisle.

JAKE. Two weeks?

ROXANNE. Yes. Two. Weeks.

JAKE. So you had the dr ...

ROXANNE. Yes I did I had the dress. I still have the dress. It is hanging in my closet. Like a wound, on a hanger.

JAKE. Sorry.

ROXANNE. Why are you apologizing?

JAKE. I don't know. Just, when you hear another guy has been an asshole to a woman you kind of feel guilty by association or something.

ROXANNE. And why is that, I wonder.

JAKE. Yeah, right?

ROXANNE. You know what I hate the most about it is how dumb the story sounds. It's like an insult to my life, how without

interest the whole "he left her when she was practically walking down the aisle." You try telling that story without sounding like a bad fucking romance novel, "jilted when," and the endless moaning about, "the flowers!" "the caterers!" "The invitations must have cost a fortune and then he just," all that money that's all anyone could talk about because nobody wanted to talk about my broken heart. It just reduces, everything, the internal story is obliterated by the external facts in such a grotesque and to have the, and not just me, but the both of us, to have that annihilated in such a careless, because that's what, I'm telling you I can't even finish my sentences that's how mad I still am about it. Because even if there was some question there, in him, some secret that could not enter the, that is only one small piece, why should that secret become everything? The destruction of everything? And with silence. Six years of silence. That is what I got. He left without a word, not one word, and then there was nothing, and then he was back, and of course I found out about it in the most hideous way, I'm at an audition, and someone I barely know starts talking about how she saw him at a reading, he's been back for months and no even, nothing. Ever. He's back in the same city, he lives within miles of me and there is no, what is it, why do people think silence is such a why is it a choice? The failure of words. Yes words fucking fail us this is hardly news but you TRY ANYWAY BECAUSE YOU'RE STILL ALIVE AREN'T YOU. Silence is such a defeat.

JAKE. You know, Kafka —

ROXANNE. Yes I do know Kafka and I know the whole story about him and Felice and I think Kafka is full of shit if you want to know the truth. All those years he was supposedly in love with her and going to marry her but he just couldn't pull it off, could he? He dumps her to go off with Milena and Dora and all the other cute little literary groupies who were suddenly all hot for Franz Kafka because he was Mr. Literary Genius at the end, and there's Felice the whole time, when he's nobody, just loving him and ready to marry him and does she show up in even one of the novels? No. The only chicks who ever show up are like barmaids with whips. Oh and his sister, she gets to show up and throw an apple at him when he turns into a bug. I hate Kafka. Why do you guys think that not talking to us, like we're not even worth talking to, why is that such a great idea to you? *(She starts to cry. Jake watches, helpless.)*

JAKE. We don't. Come on. We don't.

ROXANNE. I'm not crying. Stage managers do not cry. Stage managers just take care of things, so that you guys get to go out there and do all the — and you know what else, I was a fantastic actress. I was fucking genius.

JAKE. I didn't even know you used to act, today was the first I ever heard about it.

ROXANNE. Well I did. And let me tell you something, this play would be a lot better if there were some women in it. The law clerk couldn't be a woman? The land surveyor? The executioner? You know how good that scene would be if the executioner were a woman?

JAKE. It's not the way it's written.

ROXANNE. It's written for fifteen different actors, Kafka didn't know anything about doubling. The producers got the bright idea that one giant movie star Bruce could play all the parts because they are alllll men. When it would be better, so many of these parts should be women! The guard, the judge especially she is just mean as a snake, hot and mean, all that shit she says about his "papers" being "limited," "this material is so limited," that is terrifying coming from a woman ... "Limited. Constrained. Beneath contempt, my friend." "My friend," so lame coming from a guy, but from a woman so much worse. Kafka's trying for terror? What scares men worse than a woman seething with dismissive rage. *(For Jake is laughing at her now.)* What?

JAKE. No, you just — you just did that better than Bruce has ever done it.

ROXANNE. Yeah because a woman should be playing it.

JAKE. Yeah, except I'm going to play it. So what is that, because that's not just contempt.

ROXANNE. No, it's contempt and sex.

JAKE. Come on, the judge wants to fuck Kafka?

ROXANNE. Everyone wants to fuck him, that's the fantasy, he just can't admit it!

JAKE. That's nuts.

ROXANNE. Listen to what she says. "You have had so many, many chances. And you offer nothing but lies. I was warned about you by Karlsman."

JAKE. I have explained my situation truthfully.

ROXANNE. The word means nothing to you.

JAKE. How can you say that? You do not know me.

ROXANNE. You are the same as every other whelp in the docket!

JAKE. So you don't think he yells that? Bruce always yells. "You are the same as every other whelp in the docket!"

ROXANNE. Look, what do I know.

JAKE. *(Seductive.)* You are the same as every other whelp in the docket. *(Then.)* Okay but how do you get to the hit from that?

ROXANNE. *(Defending her choice.)* Because it's not just seductive, it's aggressive and seductive. Like the sex, the fantasy sex that Kafka never gets, I mean? Is going to be great. "You are the same as every other whelp in the docket." *(She slaps him. He reaches up and stops her hand.)*

JAKE. Hey!

ROXANNE. Sorry, oh sorry —

JAKE. No no, that was great, this is great, hit me again —

ROXANNE. Jake — *(Behind them, Harry sneaks onstage, watches.)*

JAKE. No come on, go back to the whelp — you are the same —

ROXANNE. You are the same as every other whelp in the docket! *(She slaps him. He grabs her hand.)*

JAKE. I am not what you say.

ROXANNE. Your protests are amusing. But ... they cannot ... stop ... death ... *(They are close. He leans in and kisses her. The kiss continues. Harry enters. He sees them kissing. For a moment he watches, aghast.)*

HARRY. Okay, is that in the script? *(Roxanne pulls herself away from Jake, straightens her clothing.)*

ROXANNE. *(To Jake.)* So, you see my point. *(To Harry.)* Jake and I were just discussing one of the other scenes.

HARRY. And, uh, what scene was that? Because, I've seen the play a couple of times and I actually don't remember that scene.

ROXANNE. Then maybe you should pay closer attention. Okay, now that Harry has finished with his fifteen-minute bathroom break —

HARRY. None too soon —

ROXANNE. We'll pick up where we left off. They've stitched a sling into the inside of the jacket because nobody wanted to mess with holsters. It takes a little getting used to. *(She crosses to the chair, picks up the jacket, and hands it to him. Jake watches her with a new and different kind of interest now. Harry tries to stay focused on the business at hand.)*

HARRY. Is this the jacket?

ROXANNE. No, it's a rehearsal jacket.

HARRY. This is nice. This is a rehearsal jacket? Wow. Broadway. Very nice.

ROXANNE. We're really happy that you like the jacket. Can you try taking the gun out? *(Harry tries to take the gun out. It gets stuck.)*

HARRY. Hang on. Hang on. *(Beat.)* Hang on.

JAKE. It's not that hard, Harry.

HARRY. It's not hard, I'm just getting used to it.

ROXANNE. It's just one move, Harry.

HARRY. Got it. *(He takes the gun out and trains it at Jake in a big awkward gesture, holding it with both hands.)*

JAKE. Is he going to do it like that?

HARRY. That's how you do it.

JAKE. No. *(He gestures to Harry, Harry gives him the gun. Jake turns away, hides the gun inside his sweatshirt, then turns and points it at Harry. He does it with a good deal more movie star panache, and he looks quite a bit better.)*

HARRY. That's what I did.

JAKE. It's not what you did.

ROXANNE. Well, it is what he did, Jake, it just doesn't look as good when Harry does it. Could you show it to him again? *(Jake does his smooth move a second time.)*

HARRY. But it's not supposed to look that good, is it? This isn't Special-Action Kafka. This is just Kafka Kafka. It's amazing the guy has a gun at all. Who on earth has a gun in Kafka?

JAKE. This guy has a gun.

HARRY. Okay, right, okay, so against all odds Kafka has given him a gun. But he's not the judge, or the guard, or the butch bartender, or Karlsman. He's a loser. Would he be that smooth with a gun?

JAKE. He's the detective.

HARRY. He's the loser detective. He just thought he was the detective and then it turns out he's the criminal.

JAKE. Well he's not really a criminal.

HARRY. I know he's not really a criminal! He's just a loser that the whole universe is crashing in on! He's Kafka! Would Kafka look like this using a gun — *(Does what Jake did.)* Or like this using a gun? *(And he does the nerdy move.)*

ROXANNE. Wonderful point, Harry, but it's not the way we've been doing it.

HARRY. You were just showing him how to do something different than the way that Bruce does it. How come you're allowed to

change it and I'm not?

ROXANNE. Because I'm the stage manager and you're the understudy! You need to do it the way Jake does it because that's what understudies do!

HARRY. I understand that, but —

ROXANNE. Are we going to have to have another conversation about rights and points of view, Harry? No? Good. Let's get going.

JAKE. No, he's right.

ROXANNE. What?

JAKE. He's right. The way I'm doing it, that's bullshit. Kafka if he ever had a gun? He'd look like this. *(He does a kind of neurotic dance with the gun.)*

HARRY. That's what I think.

JAKE. We've been doing it wrong.

ROXANNE. You're doing it the way you've been directed to do it.

JAKE. Yeah but it's wrong.

HARRY. Yeah, because —

ROXANNE. Sttt! Harry! You're the understudy! You don't get to redirect the play!

HARRY. I'm not saying redirect. But I could call the director and just mention —

ROXANNE. The director is not going to talk to the understudy!

JAKE. It doesn't have to be a big deal. I'll just do it that way, tonight, you can tell Bruce that we're changing the blocking a little bit. He'll be okay with it. *(A beat, then.)*

ROXANNE. *(Soft.)* Bruce is not going to be okay with it, Jake.

JAKE. I'll take care of it.

ROXANNE. No. No. I will take care of it.

JAKE. It's fine!

ROXANNE. *(Very firm.)* I said, I will take care of it. *(She looks at Jake. He shrugs, turns away for a moment, stretching his arms. Behind his back Harry makes a face at Roxanne.)*

HARRY. *(Quiet.)* Is there a problem with Bruce?

JAKE. There is no problem with Bruce. But she's right, it'll be better coming from her. Where you want to pick this thing up, Harry. *(Harry looks between the two of them, but they are not looking at him now.)*

HARRY. Well ... just after your speech, does that seem?

JAKE. Sure. Great. Maybe I'll take the end of it so we ramp up a little.

HARRY. Okay.

ROXANNE. *(Continuing.)* Okay the rest of the scene blah blah blah at the table, blah blah blah at the door, blah blah blah gun, blah blah blah Jake exits. Take it away, Jake. *(She leaves the stage. The lights shift. There is the sound of thunder in the distance. Jake looks at Harry, who nods.)*

JAKE. Accept your fate, my friend. There is nothing anyone can do.

HARRY. *(Frightened.)* I do not accept that.

JAKE. *(Quiet.)* Then it will be the worse for you. *(Harry takes a step back, looks around, runs to the door.)*

HARRY. *(More and more upset.)* I must — speak to someone in authority. They must be made to understand!

JAKE. They will not speak to you! You are nothing to them!

HARRY. You must send for my sister. My mother. My neighbor, Frau Kaufman. If I write to Frau Kaufman, she can tell my sister —

JAKE. If you ask for their assistance they will come under the same suspicion which has befallen you!

HARRY. How can I defend myself if you isolate me from everyone!

JAKE. You are a criminal inspector! You know what people are. Your family will not know you. Your friends will not recognize you. They fear your guilt has doomed them and so they hide inside their own hearts and wish you were already gone. *(He and Harry stare at each other.)* You are alone.

HARRY. There is one person ... one person ...

JAKE. Yes? Who is that?

HARRY. Can I ask a question?

ROXANNE. *(Yelling from house.)* Oh my god. Do you have to?

HARRY. Who is this one person?

ROXANNE. No one knows, Harry that's why it's called Kafka.

HARRY. Yeah, but —

ROXANNE. Just do the scene!

HARRY. I'm doing it.

ROXANNE. Do it!

HARRY. I'm doing it!

ROXANNE. Do it! Do it!

HARRY. I'm doing it! *(Harry goes back to the door.)* There is one person ... one person ...

JAKE. Yes? Who is that?

HARRY. I can't remember. *(He thinks about this, sad. Jake stands,*

stretches, yawns.)

JAKE. There is always one person we cannot remember. If we could, what a different world it would be. You must wait here, until the magistrate arrives to read the charges.

HARRY. I will not wait. *(He pulls out the gun, and waves it at Jake, in a foolish and weak gesture. Jake considers it.)*

JAKE. You are still thinking of the power you once had. You would do better to ponder other possibilities. *(Jake goes. Harry is left alone with the gun. He goes to the window.)*

HARRY. The storm is coming. Soon night will fall. I will be trapped here. This is outrageous. They don't see me, they don't see what I do, they don't see what I have, if I protest they shout he is not one of us, they write he is nothing when I did what I was asked to do. How can I be nothing? I did what I was told to do! *(Beat.)* The storm is upon us. *(Beat.)* The storm is upon us. *(Beat.)* The storm is upon us.

ROXANNE. LAURA WHERE IS THE STORM? *(There is a sharp change in light, and loud thunder. Rain comes. Music. It is really spectacular, what is happening on that stage. Harry looks around, terrified. He collapses, in a pool of light, looks at the gun, looks around, desperate and helpless. The effects stop, and the lights come up.)* That was good, Harry. *(To air.)* Laura can you reset so that we can try the cue again?

JAKE. *(Entering.)* Okay, it works much better. What he's doing with the gun just works much better. *(To Harry.)* Can you show me that again? I mean that was awesome. *(To Roxanne.)* Is that okay?

ROXANNE. It's fine, it's going to take her a minute to reset.

HARRY. I didn't do much I just ...

ROXANNE. Laura, are you up there? Are you with us? Are you stoned but trying?

HARRY. *(Distracted.)* Wow. I'm sorry, I'm just ...

JAKE. You okay?

HARRY. *(Mystified.)* I, the speech — so much despair, Kafka puts you in so much despair that you're just lost-and then you feel ... Something ... not something. Nothing. He makes you nothing. And then there's something else.

JAKE. Something else?

HARRY. Yes, in the despair. In your heart — something — plain, just plain — and curious ...

JAKE. What is it?

HARRY. I don't know. *(A cell goes off.)*

ROXANNE. CELL PHONE. CELL PHONE.

JAKE. It's me, it's me, sorry sorry sorry sorry my agent. *(He answers the phone.)* Hey, what's up? Yeah, it's going good, we're working on the trial scene and coming up with some new stuff so it's ... oh they did! What'd they say? *(Beat; disappointment.)* Oh. Well — so what'd they say? Uh-huh. Uh-huh. *(It is so clearly bad news that Roxanne and Harry cannot help but notice.)* Did they say who they were going with? Well, it's just — if the part's not cast, I don't see how they can be so definitive, they don't want me. I mean, if they don't even have somebody who's accepted the part — no it doesn't matter, Tony, it's just, do they — I have a hard time believing they didn't see the grosses from, sixty-seven million in one weekend is, I just think that does put me in a different category and it doesn't sound like they're even acknowledging ... yeah of course the effects were great, but a movie is more than effects, I think I get a little credit for bringing in some of — Jesus, Tony if the movie had tanked you know they would have blamed the whole thing on me, not the effects. I don't think I'm asking too much to get a little credit that the thing is a big fucking hit. I don't think that. And this show I'm doing, it's Broadway, for crying out, and the notices have been — Look. Is there anybody I can ... talk to? *(Then.)* Never mind. I'll talk to you later. *(He hangs up. A beat. Roxanne and Harry watch him, worried.)* I need to take a piss. *(He goes. Harry and Roxanne are left alone.)*

ROXANNE. *(Then.)* He was up for a big movie. He really wanted it. It's a little more serious apparently than what he usually does. He's actually pretty tired of all the action stuff.

HARRY. So that ... must be pretty disappointing for him.

ROXANNE. Sounds like it.

HARRY. *(A beat.)* So what's the problem with Bruce?

ROXANNE. There's no problem with Bruce.

HARRY. Before, you said —

ROXANNE. I know what I said before. But there is no problem with Bruce. Bruce is a big star and that means there's always a problem. Which is the same thing as no problem. Understand?

HARRY. Sure.

ROXANNE. Good. *(Yelling.)* Laura the rain is leaking through the windows again, can you put a call in to Ricky or Paulie or Joey or whoever it is we're supposed to be talking to, over there at IATSE?

Anybody except Junior. That guy is an idiot. *(She starts to mop up the floor.)*

HARRY. You're good at this, aren't you?

ROXANNE. What?

HARRY. I mean, you just seem — on top of things. It's impressive. You seem so much more sure of yourself than you were — before.

ROXANNE. I'm not talking to you about "before," Harry.

HARRY. I'm sorry. *(Beat.)* I um ... when I was in the bathroom, I could hear you. On the loudspeaker. And, you're right. I never said ... anything. I was a coward.

ROXANNE. Yes. You were.

HARRY. And you were ... the one person.

ROXANNE. What?

HARRY. That thing that Kafka says, there was one person. That he can't remember who it is? And that, without that one person, you're alone? *(Beat.)* You were that. For me. I felt not alone, with you. I felt whole, on the earth. And I — I've never felt that. Since. It's so lonely. The world is so lonely to me now. It wasn't when I was with you.

ROXANNE. *(Takes this in, then.)* Then why did you leave?

HARRY. Who knows. I'm an actor. We're insane.

ROXANNE. That's the explanation? That's the lousy explanation?

HARRY. It's all I got.

ROXANNE. Then stop talking!

HARRY. Roxanne —

ROXANNE. Stop talking! You say one more word and I am going to hit you on the head with a shovel. *(She starts to walk away. He grabs her by the arm.)*

HARRY. Don't. Please.

ROXANNE. Harry. Don't. You have to not touch me, Harry. Harry. Harry. *(Harry puts his hand on her face. She stops. He leans in and kisses her. The kiss goes on. She finally pushes him away. They look at each other for a moment, and then she wallops him.)*

HARRY. Owwww! Hey, owwww!

ROXANNE. That's all you have to say? Owwww? Owwww?

HARRY. You hit me!

ROXANNE. Yeah, well you left me. That made me say "owww" too. *(She stalks off. Harry considers this.)*

HARRY. I know a lot of people who say we're crazy. Crazy actors! Don't date an actor, they're crazy! And I'm not actually in any posi-

tion to argue that, given my personal history. My financial situation. The fact that I actually had to change my name, we don't need to get into why that happened, but it's not actually a story that recommends acting as a sensible profession. I mean, it's great being an actor, when you get to do it, but it's also incoherent. Incoherent is the right word honestly, it's really not, as I think it's clear, it's not a mature choice in a lot of ways. But you know I worked in an office once. I was a temp? So I was doing temp things, answering phones, typing up memos, and then for a while they had me adding numbers all day. Seriously, I sat in this cubicle with a little adding machine and tapped in these numbers, I can't remember why, but periodically this woman, her name was Jane something, would come by my cubicle and just scream at me! Literally hold out slips of paper, and she would be in an utter rage and I would think what what? And it would be nothing. A number in the wrong place. One time I typed up a memo on the wrong color paper. Like that. So I know people think people who work in the theatre are crazy? But I'm not so sure we're any worse than the rest of you. *(Jake enters.)*

JAKE. Dude you know the loudspeakers are still on so when you do that it's like everyone can hear you. So, what, are we running through this again?

HARRY. I don't know, Roxanne ... went to get something.

JAKE. *(Pointed.)* Roxanne is crying in the hallway.

HARRY. She is?

JAKE. You're a moron.

HARRY. Should I go talk to her?

JAKE. No, I don't actually think that's a good idea.

HARRY. So are you two ...

JAKE. Are we what?

HARRY. Well, before, when you were ...

JAKE. When we were what?

HARRY. There was a kind of ...

JAKE. A kind of what?

HARRY. Well, you kissed her.

JAKE. That's right I did. She hit me and then I kissed her. With you it kind of went the other way, right? I mean, I'm right about that, you kissed her and then she hit you?

HARRY. So?

JAKE. Nothing. It's just, with me it was hit then kiss. Which I think is a little ...

HARRY. You were doing a scene.

JAKE. I don't want to split hairs.

HARRY. It was a scene!

JAKE. Whatever you say. *(A beat. Harry nods. Jake has his PDA out; he is emailing people.)*

HARRY. Sorry about your movie.

JAKE. It's fine. It's probably not going to happen anyway. They kept bumping the dates around. Who knows if they have the financing in place.

HARRY. But you liked the script?

JAKE. It was okay.

HARRY. Something else will come up.

JAKE. Oh yeah. I have six offers for other projects sitting down there in my dressing room.

HARRY. *(Surprised.)* Oh, yeah?

JAKE. Apparently the universe is very interested in paying me millions of dollars to run around and wave guns at bad guys. The way I do it. Not the way you do it.

HARRY. Wow. Millions of dollars.

JAKE. It's a living. *(He keeps working on his PDA.)*

HARRY. What's your favorite one?

JAKE. What?

HARRY. Of those other scripts, which one is the one you like the best.

JAKE. You know, I don't know, Harry. There's one that's kind of okay about a giant alligator that's, like, eating a town, in Florida.

HARRY. A giant alligator.

JAKE. Yes, and there's also a hurricane so we do in fact spend quite a bit of time getting helpless people to hop into trucks.

HARRY. Sounds great.

JAKE. Do you want me to get you an audition? Plenty of parts out there for people who are gonna get eaten. Although I got to be frank, your type, you're up against a huge pool. "Normal boring shitheads no one cares if they live or die," I think that's the breakdown. *(There is a slight pause at this. They look at each other. Then.)*

HARRY. You know, I don't think so. I'm kind of hoping that this Kafka thing will run for a while. *(Beat.)* I like it. I really like this play. I think it's interesting. All that stuff you told me about Kafka? I never knew any of that and I found it really intriguing. And when I do the lines, something happens to my heart. So even if I never get

to go on? I'd rather do this. *(Beat.)* Plus I like the sets. And I think the lighting is pretty. *(He goes offstage. Jake sits there, chastened.)*

JAKE. *(Calling.)* Hey Laura, Laura you up there? Because whatever you have been smoking today? I could use some. *(The set starts to move again.)* Whoa. Hey. No no — I didn't say — you probably shouldn't be moving things, whoa! We aren't ... we haven't done the judge scene or the banana scene yet. Roxanne's gonna freak — hey Laura! LAURA.

ROXANNE. *(Entering, fast, Harry behind her.)* LAURA. Laura what are you doing, we have three more scenes to do in the interrogation room and we haven't, Laura, Laura stop it! Stop it!

JAKE. Sorry, I just like said "hi" to her and she started moving the set.

ROXANNE. No no no you can't say anything to her! It startles her and then she does things! You know this! LAURA! *(But the back wall is gone and another set is coming into place.)*

HARRY. Oh good the third act! I was hoping we'd get to that. *(Calling.)* Thank you, Laura!

ROXANNE. Don't thank her! Who knows what she'll do!

HARRY. Sorry.

ROXANNE. And don't talk to me. Laura, this is the last scene! Why are we in the last scene? *(The set continues to fly in. It is a deep and gloomy pit, a medieval dungeon. The lights shift.)*

HARRY. Wow, it's beautiful!

ROXANNE. Yes it's a lovely, lovely dungeon.

HARRY. And Big! Wow, all the way to the back of the theatre I love it when they do that it's sooo spooky. Hellloooo. Hellllloooooo.

ROXANNE. Harry come back here. The problem is of course that this is the scene in which you dance, and because it is in fact the last scene of the play the choreographer is not scheduled to come in until later this afternoon.

HARRY. *(Delighted.)* Oh that's right I get to dance.

ROXANNE. *(Yelling to Laura.)* THE PROBLEM IS THAT WE DON'T HAVE THE CHOREOGRAPHER, LAURA, SO WE CAN'T ACTUALLY DO THIS SCENE OUT OF SEQUENCE.

LAURA.

JAKE. It's okay I'll teach it to him.

ROXANNE. No, Jake, you don't have to do that —

JAKE. I can do it —

ROXANNE. No, this is too crazy. I'm just going to send you home and I'm going to have a talk with Laura and then I'm going to have her run lines with Harry, that seems like a fitting end to this disaster of a rehearsal. You and I will leave them to each other. Take the day, Jake. I'll see you at half hour.

JAKE. I don't want to go home.

ROXANNE. Jake —

JAKE. Really, I don't. I want to do this. We can run the scene and then I'll teach him the dance. *(She looks at him. He looks back, stubborn.)*

ROXANNE. Well. What an excellent idea. All right. We're in the last scene. *(All the lights go out, plunging the theatre into instant darkness. Beat.)* What fresh hell is this. LAURA!

HARRY. Maybe the entire eastern seaboard is having a blackout.

ROXANNE. Thank you Harry. Stay there. Stay there. Stay. Stay. *(Her flashlight pops on and she goes to get two other flashlights.)* Now don't go anywhere. I'm coming right back. *(She goes up to the back of the house, with her flashlight.)*

HARRY. I love that. That she just knew where the flashlights were and that she could just reach for them and there they were! And now she's just taking care of this, just the way she took care of everything else. It's really ...

JAKE. Don't go there, Harry.

HARRY. I just mean it's impressive.

JAKE. And I just mean, don't go there. *(They sit in silence for a moment.)*

HARRY. So then you two actually are ...

JAKE. We are what?

HARRY. Well ... do you like her?

JAKE. Yeah, I like her.

HARRY. But do you like like her?

JAKE. I like her ... a lot.

HARRY. I like her too.

JAKE. Yeah, but she hit you after you kissed her and she hit me —

HARRY. Never mind. Never mind. *(A beat.)* I like the dance. I'm glad we're going to try that.

JAKE. Oh yeah the dance is great.

HARRY. So whose idea was that, to put a dance in?

JAKE. It was Kafka's idea. Didn't you read the script? It says: And then he dances.

HARRY. Okay sure. I just think, I thought, a dance, that's a weird choice for Kafka.

JAKE. Yeah you just think that because you don't know Kafka. Oh look, we have light. *(For the lights have been slowly creeping up behind them and they are now both lit, beautifully.)* Thanks Roxanne! *(Roxanne is hurrying up the aisle.)*

ROXANNE. Now she's hiding from me. As well she should. The booth is like, the inside of a bong up there. I'd fire her except she has an uncle at IATSE who'd break my knees. Harry, you need me to run through the blocking?

HARRY. No, I got it. *(He goes to the window, and Jake leaves the stage.)*

ROXANNE. Then let's get this show on the road. Whenever you're ready. Or even, before you're ready. *(A short beat then —)*

HARRY. The light is gone. *(Beat.)* You know, the light really is gone. I'm like in a black hole here. Are we in the right cue?

ROXANNE. You need to move a couple feet back. *(Off his scooting.)* Further further — for heaven's sake, Harry you're the only actor I've ever met who can't find his light. FURTHER. *(He finds the hot spot.)*

HARRY. Found it!

ROXANNE. Good. *(A pause.)*

HARRY. The light is gone. *(Beat.)* Actually, the light is found.

ROXANNE. Harry! *(Offstage, Jake laughs.)*

HARRY. *(Laughing himself.)* Sorry, sorry. *(Beat.)* The light is gone. Fatigue. What fatigue! My appeal must be heard. This calamity cannot stand. I wonder if anyone has fed my cat. My cat! My cat! *(Then.)* I'm a little confused about the cat.

ROXANNE. Just say the lines!

HARRY. This is just the first time we've heard about the cat, right? I didn't know he had a cat.

ROXANNE. He has a fucking cat!

HARRY. Well, why is this the first time he's asked about the cat? The cat would be dead by now. *(Jake enters.)*

JAKE. No, we figured this out. His sister has been feeding the cat.

HARRY. How do you know?

JAKE. There's a bunch of clues in the trial section. It makes sense when you work it through.

HARRY. But why is Kafka so coy about the cat?

JAKE. Dude, Kafka was coy about everything.

HARRY. No he wasn't. The trial, guilt, the light is gone, none of this is coy at all.

JAKE. No, the big things he hits you on the head with. The little things, you got to figure it out. It's like a totally reversed universe. You're like out on the darkling plain, you know, totally alone with no light to guide you and then suddenly: there's a cat! And then the show, which is, why is it snowing? And then you dance. It's like that.

HARRY. "Darkling plain?"

JAKE. You know what I mean.

HARRY. I do, I just, I'm impressed.

ROXANNE. Yes, that is impressive, Jake. Now, do you think we could try the scene any time in the current century.

JAKE. Yeah yeah let's go, I want to get to the dancing. *(He heads offstage. A cell phone rings.)*

ROXANNE. *(Screaming.)* CELL PHONE. CELL PHONE. *(The cell continues to ring.)* Jake! Harry.

JAKE. No it's not me, that's not my ring.

HARRY. I don't have a cell phone.

ROXANNE. LAURA!!! *(The phone continues to ring.)* Oh wait. That's me. Sorry, that's me. *(She takes the cell off her belt and answers it. While she speaks, Jake starts to do a little dance. Harry watches him.)* Hi, it's Roxanne. Oh, hi, Dean, yeah he's working out fine; it's going great. *(Beat.)* Oh uh-huh. Uh-huh. *(Beat.)* Uh-huh. Uh-huh. *(Beat.)* Uh-huh. Wow. That's just — did — *(Beat.)* Uh-huh. And there's no — I don't — I realize that. Okay. I'll tell them. *(She hangs up. Harry and Jake are doing dance floor moves, trying to make each other laugh, completely ignoring her. She takes a second.)* Guys. Guys. GUYS. *(They stop, look over to her, laughing. She is not laughing. There is a pause.)* That was Dean. There's a — uh. There's been a development.

JAKE. A "development?" What kind of development?

ROXANNE. Bruce took a movie. *(A beat, then.)* I'm just going to tell you the whole thing because you're going to find out anyway and you might as well get it from me. That movie you didn't get? Bruce took it.

JAKE. Bruce ... he couldn't have. That thing, it doesn't, first of all, he's twenty years too old for it, and second they can't meet his quote.

ROXANNE. Well, apparently he just fell in love with it.

JAKE. Love? He doesn't do things for love. He's never heard of love. He thinks love is for pussies.

ROXANNE. Well, he's doing it for whatever they can pay him. And they bumped the dates. Up, they bumped them up and they're

going into pre-production now, so Bruce is going to take a little time for himself while they do that so he's leaving the show by the end of the week so they're posting the closing notice today. They're posting today and closing on Sunday.

HARRY. We're closing?

ROXANNE. On Sunday.

JAKE. We're closing?

ROXANNE. Bruce is leaving so they're closing the show. Yes.

JAKE. But we're ... we're selling out. The plan was that he, if he had to ... I would ...

ROXANNE. I know.

JAKE. That's what we're doing, we're like, rehearsing to put in, so if Bruce does something like this because they knew he could do something like this because he does things like this. That's why we're here. Because they knew he was gonna do this!

ROXANNE. Well, he did. And they don't think you can carry the show.

JAKE. I can't carry the show?

ROXANNE. I hate it that they made me tell you that.

JAKE. I can't carry the show?

ROXANNE. They're morons. You know this.

JAKE. I can carry this show.

ROXANNE. Listen, Jake this is not about you. It was always going to be a limited run anyway. Don't make this about you.

JAKE. I can fucking carry this show!

ROXANNE. Everybody knows you can carry the show but if Bruce breaks his contract he's on the hook for it. They can collect millions. It's like the plot of *The Producers*, they make more money if we close. It's money in the bank! If they run it, with you, it's just — it's just —

JAKE. It's just WHAT?

ROXANNE. It's money in the bank, Jake. Don't make it personal.
(*A beat, then —*)

HARRY. (*Awed.*) Bruce has that much money? That he can just pay off to get out of his contract?

JAKE. HIS FUCKING QUOTE IS TWENTY-TWO MILLION DOLLARS PER PICTURE. SO YEAH. HE HAS THAT MUCH MONEY. (*Beat.*) He wasn't even on the list for that part. He isn't right for that part. The only reason he went after it was because he knew I wanted it. And he got mad that my movie killed at the box

office so he ... he ... he had to prove that ...

HARRY. Would he do that?

JAKE. It's show business. Of course he'd do it. And they'd do it. And then it's done. (*A sad beat.*)

ROXANNE. I hate theatre. I hate this shit. I'm never doing this again. I hate all of it.

JAKE. (*Sudden.*) This is a great play. People love this play. Three hours of Kafka? And they love it. Not because of Bruce, Bruce is shitty in this play. The play is awesome. That's why they like this play. (*Beat.*)

HARRY. So ... are you ... were we ... are you going to show me the dance? (*Silence.*) Aren't we going to dance?

ROXANNE. They'll pay you through the end of the week, Harry. But you're not going on.

HARRY. Yeah, but I mean ... I kind of was, you know. I just mean, we're in the cue. Right?

ROXANNE. No, this is not actually the cue. (*The cue changes, more light. Music.*) Ah. Yes. Thank you, Laura. (*Then.*) This would be the cue. Nevertheless, we are not doing the dance. I don't want to do it and neither does Jake.

HARRY. I want to do it.

ROXANNE. No one else wants to do it, Harry.

HARRY. Well ... I just. I think that's a mistake.

ROXANNE. No one cares what you think! No one cares what I think. No one cares what Jake thinks. We need a little time to ourselves if you don't mind.

HARRY. You told him he could go home before and he didn't want to.

ROXANNE. Things are a little different now, aren't they?

HARRY. Not that different. You guys have both been telling me all day I was never going on. I'm still not going on.

ROXANNE. We just lost our jobs. So, things are different for us.

HARRY. I don't care if you do it or not. I'm gonna do it. So where do I, where does it start again? Here? This is where it starts? And you slide sort of back and you do the funny thing with your hand —

JAKE. That's not how you do it.

HARRY. I can do it however I want.

JAKE. That's not how you do it.

HARRY. I don't care how you do it.

JAKE. (*Impatient.*) That's not how you do it. (*He stands and goes to show him.*) It starts on the downbeat. You move your arm — Can

we have some music? *(The music stops. They all look up at the booth. They look at the booth, then to Roxanne. She just stares at them.)*

HARRY. Come on. Roxanne. Please. We're out on a darkling plain here. Silence is a defeat. Isn't it? *(Roxanne takes this in for a moment, but then looks away.)*

JAKE. You know he's right. Kafka wrote this story — *(She groans.)* Josephine Singer! There are all these mice? And they're all dying, but they sing. *(She looks at him. This strangely makes sense to her.)*

ROXANNE. All right. All right! Laura. Could you cue us up please, from the top of the music? Please? Laura? Laura? *(Beat.)* Please, Laura. *(There is a long pause. They watch the booth in silence. The moment is excruciating in its silence. Then the music comes up.)*

Thank you, Laura. *(She looks to Jake and Harry. They find their cue and start to move, completely in sync with each other. The music continues as they twirl. Harry reaches his arm out to Roxanne while Jake continues the dance. After a moment, she takes it. As he turns her, she laughs, and they all do the dance together. It starts to snow. They continue to dance in the fading light.)*

End of play

PROPERTY LIST

Gun
2 cell phones
Props
Loose handful of business cards, including an Equity card
Ghost light
Bottles at a bar
Glassware
Tape recorder
Large book
Inkpot
Quill pen
Script with blocking
Pile of papers
2 bananas
Jacket
Mop
3 flashlights