

*At rise: Four empty chairs are found placed in a row downstage C., facing the fourth wall. Presently, AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 enters, carrying a playbill, and seats himself in the chair second from the end, stage R. He peruses his playbill for a few moments, before AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 enters from stage L. carrying a large bag of some description. He approaches AUDIENCE MEMBER 1, pointing at the empty chair immediately to his left.*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Excuse me, would you happen to know if this seat is taken?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

*(Looking up from his playbill.)*

Um...not to my knowledge, no.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Oh good.

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 sits in the chair next to AUDIENCE MEMBER 1, placing the bag in front of him. After a moment, AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 turns and eyes the empty chair to his left, before turning back to face AUDIENCE MEMBER 1.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

*(Indicting the chair to his left.)*

Excuse me, would you happen to know if this seat is taken?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

*(Looking up from his playbill.)*

Uh...well, again, not as far as I know.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Oh good.

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 proceeds to place his bag on the chair to his left, then turns back to face the fourth wall and sighs contentedly. A moment or two later he begins fanning his face with his hand.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

My goodness, it's rather warm in here, isn't it?

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 stands and removes his coat, then sits back down, placing his coat on his lap. After a moment or two he begins eyeing the empty chair to AUDIENCE MEMBER 1'S right.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

*(Indicating the chair to AUDIENCE MEMBER 1'S right.)*

Excuse me, would you happen to know if that seat is taken?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

*(Looking up from his playbill, a hint of irritation in his voice.)*

Again, not that I'm aware of.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Oh good.

*(Handing AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 his coat.)*

I wonder if you'd mind, um...

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

Oh...um...no...not at all.

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 takes the coat and places it on the chair to his right, then quickly turns his attention back to his playbill.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Oh yes, there's nothing quite like a trip to the theatre, is there?

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 does not answer.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

I said, there's nothing quite like a trip to the theatre, is there?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

*(Reluctantly, without looking up from his playbill.)*

No...no, there isn't.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Yes, the dark, cavernous space, the suspension of disbelief, the anticipation of what's about to unfold. Oh yes, it's all quite thrilling...quite thrilling.

*(Leaning into AUDIENCE MEMBER 1.)*

What's that you're reading, then?

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 turns the cover of the playbill to face AUDIENCE MEMBER 2.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Oh, the playbill. Yes...yes, of course.

*(Looking around the area immediately before him.)*

Yes, I...I suppose I must have dropped mine somewhere.

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 leans in very close to AUDIENCE MEMBER 1'S playbill, prompting a look of displeasure from AUDIENCE MEMBER 1.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Oh yes, she's quite stunning, isn't she, the leading lady? Quite a stunning name, too – Olivia de La Grange. I wonder how long it took her to think that up.

*(Beat.)*

Mind you, I don't know when that picture was taken, but I've a feeling it was a considerable number of years before my twelve-year-old Bichon Frise was brought into this world.

*(Beat.)*

That's sixty-four in dog years, of course – which is probably closer to what Olivia de La Grange is trying to conceal.

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 leans in even closer to AUDIENCE MEMBER 1'S playbill.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

The leading man's headshot isn't exactly truth in advertising, either. He almost looks like a child there, doesn't he?

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 deliberately closes the playbill and places it on his lap in an attempt to reclaim his personal space. AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 leans back into his normal sitting position, seemingly unoffended.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Yes, there's nothing quite like a good mystery, is there?

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 doesn't answer for fear of being drawn into a conversation.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

I said, there's nothing like a good mystery, is there?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

*(Reluctantly.)*

No.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

No. And you don't see many of them these days, do you? Out of fashion, I suppose. Nowadays it's all dysfunctional families and society's ills and what have you.

*(Pause.)*

And that's all well and good, I suppose, but where's the suspense? Where's the mystery of the unknown? Where's the thrill of being slowly lured into a riddle that baffles and perplexes and defies explanation, until finally the last piece of the puzzle falls into place? Why is that so unfashionable? It's a mystery in itself, isn't it?

*(AUDIENCE MEMBER 1 again doesn't answer for fear of being dragged into a conversation.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

I said, it's a mystery in itself, isn't it?

AUDIENCE MEMBER 1

*(Reluctantly.)*

Yes.

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

Still, there's no accounting for taste, is there? Mind you, if I had my way—

*(Just then, AUDIENCE MEMBER 2'S cell phone begins ringing in his pocket, prompting a look of horror from AUDIENCE MEMBER 1. AUDIENCE MEMBER 2 reaches into his pocket and answers the phone.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER 2

*(With genuine concern.)*

Beverly, what is it? What's wrong? Is it Pom Pom?

*(Pause.)*

Well, did you heat it in the microwave first?

*(Beat.)*

Well, there's your answer. She won't eat it straight out of the can — she likes it warmed through a little first.

*(Pause.)*

That's quite all right, there's no need to apologize. Now pop it in at fifty percent power for about ten seconds and that should do the trick.

*(Beat.)*