

At rise: There is a small table placed downstage center, with a chair to the right of it, and a small bench seat to the left. ACTOR 1 enters.

ACTOR 1

Act Two, Scene Three. I enter from stage right...nervous but in character, cross to the chair placed downstage center, next to the small table, and sit. I look up, seemingly forlorn, and begin my brief soliloquy that speaks of the turmoil and heartache inside of me that was all-too-obviously telegraphed in the previous scene.

(beat)

I direct it to the fourth wall, as if speaking to anyone and no one, *and yet*...some woman in the third or fourth row is wearing a blouse of a color so loud and garish that I find my peripheral vision is being constantly distracted by it, thus diminishing the gravitas of what I'm attempting to impart to the audience at large. God I hate her – she's really screwing this up for me.

(beat)

I ignore her as best I can and concentrate on the words. Okay, I'm done. God, I hate her – she really threw me off.

(beat)

I think my expression at the end really got them, though...despite the distraction of Coco the Clown in row C or D or wherever the hell she is.

(beat)

All right then, darling, let's be having you...make your entrance please...*now*.

(beat)

Christ, where is she? Come on, come on!

(beat)

All right, don't panic. Try to look deep in thought, as if there's a very important inner dialogue raging inside of you – then maybe the audience will think it's all deliberate.

(beat)

God, I could strangle her right now! *Where the hell is she?*

ACTOR 2 enters from stage left.

ACTOR 2

I enter hurriedly from stage left.

ACTOR 1

*At last!*

ACTOR 2

I run across the stage, desperately seeking the whereabouts of my one true love...even though I can see him sitting right there and would have to be half blind not to have spotted him immediately...*but*...this is theatre, so on I search, hoping, hoping, until...oh yes, there he is...my heart's desire...in the form of one of the most obnoxious and egotistical jerks I've ever had the misfortune of working with. I smile sweetly.

ACTOR 1

I suddenly become aware of her presence...and of the very dark circles under her eyes, which no amount of make-up was able to disguise, apparently. Out on the town with the director again last night, I'm assuming. My, what a far cry from the delicate little flower she's attempting to fob off on the audience right now. Drunken old slattern. I turn away, hurt.

ACTOR 2

I drop to my knees and beseech him. If he only knew why I had to rebuff him in the library in the previous scene. If he only knew of the deep dark secret I've been forced to keep hidden from him. If he only...if he only...if he'd only look me in the eye for just a second! I mean, come on, we're supposed to be doing this thing together. It's called acting. It's reacting as well as speaking, you know? I need something to work with here. Hello? Hello?

ACTOR 1

I wonder if there's any agents in the audience tonight. I invited six but none of them responded. Wait a second...that guy back there with the glasses looks like he might be.

(beat)

On second thoughts, no...too hip. Useless bastards. I expect they were all "too busy." Yeah, too busy propping up some bar, getting wasted after a hard day's skimming cash off the backs of their clients' hard work. Parasites. They should be sat out there doing their job...scouting for talent...witnessing art.

(beat)

Oh, look out – her big speech is about to end. And not before time. She milks that thing like a Jersey cow.

(beat)

I look up at her with a mixture of pity and confusion, and demand that she tells me her deep dark secret so that I can feign shock and surprise for yet another evening.

ACTOR 2

Oh look, it does have eyes after all. Good evening and thank you for joining me. It's so nice to have company. So...you want to know my terrible secret, do you? All right, I'll tell you. It's an almost uncontrollable desire to see you stripped

naked and strung up by your balls from the light rigging, with a large prop of my choosing rammed up that vain, self-important and utterly talentless asshole of yours. But...since that's unlikely to transpire and not actually in the text, I suppose I'd better stick with the scripted version.

(beat)

She covers her face with her hands, dreading his reaction to what she is about to disclose.

ACTOR 1

Yes, cover it up, dear – it's hard staring into those dark, puffy eyes for too long. I feel like I'm sharing a scene with a panda bear.

(beat)

And if there are any agents out there tonight, I hope they're taking note, because *this* is acting. Not only am I having to navigate this scene alone with Ling-Ling here, but I mean, really – she had an abortion two years ago after a brief romp in the rhododendrons with the former gardener? I mean, who writes this crap? I'm supposed to be shocked and appalled by this revelation? It's hardly the stuff of Grand Guignol. Now, if she'd been raped by her father and given birth to a hideously deformed, inbred monstrosity that she kept chained to a post behind the summerhouse, *then...then* we'd have a revelation...*then* we'd have something to work with. But no, it's just your average, plain vanilla abortion saga, in response to which – and to great effect, using every skill at my disposal – I fix her with a steely gaze that betrays neither outrage nor compassion.

ACTOR 2

I pause briefly, looking into his eyes to see if my words have been met with pity or loathing.

(beat)

As it turns out, it's neither. It's that same vacant, idiotic expression he wears every time the director gives him a note – he tries to pretend he's understood, but in truth just looks lobotomized. And his parents, with the benefit of hindsight, would probably agree with me now that that might have been the best option.

(beat)

I express lots of guilt, etcetera, and explain how my father forced me into it.

ACTOR 1

An abortion? I'll tell you what an abortion is – this script. Hard to believe it got a first production, let alone a revival. I should be doing Mamet or Pinter or Shepard, not this potboiling drivel.

Pause.

ACTOR 2

Oh Christ, he's forgotten his lines – and *always* at the same spot.