

Fringe Quartet

SCENE ONE – The Audition

(Teresa (Tez) and Maggie (Mags) are sitting on chairs, obviously waiting. Tez is reading a script, Mags is biting her nails.)

Suzanne (Sooz) enters, furiously and angrily shouting back)

SOOZ. Thank you, goodnight, and up yours! At least we know what the G in your name stands for. Gigantic Ginormous Gargantuan Git!!

MAGS. Did you not get the part?

SOOZ. It's a scam. It is, really. £55 train ticket from Manchester, £80 for a decent Hotel Room, £20 taxi fare to make sure I was here on time, £60 for a new wig. They barely acknowledged my existence. You both here for this so-called "step right up, we'll see anyone" open audition?

TEZ. Yes.

SOOZ. They're not seeing anyone. They're giving the part to a man.

TEZ. The high-flying, high-powered executive business woman part?

SOOZ. Yes, apparently.

TEZ. Great. That's just... great.

(She starts to cry).

MAGS. You mean I ran all this way for nothing?

SOOZ. Where did you run from?

MAGS. The ladies. They said it was just down the corridor. But they lied. And when I did find a cubicle, it was locked, so I tried another one, but that had a man in it. So I just panicked. You're very smart.

SOOZ. It was for the audition. Waste of time.

MAGS. Did we have to get dressed up?

SOOZ. Well, no...

TEZ. Look, I shouldn't worry. It never works. Whatever I go for, I'm always wrong. I once went for the part of a 34-year old dark-haired failed actress who didn't get the parts she went for. I didn't get it.

MAGS. How old were you?

TEZ. 34.

MAGS. Right.

TEZ. Just thought this was the one. I really thought I could make a go of this one.

SOOZ. Yeh, me too, if I'm honest.

MAGS. I knew I never had a chance. I always get to play the comedy roles, the ditzy parts, and this one was as far removed from ditzy as it gets.

TEZ. So what do we do now? Leave our CV? Trundle off back home? Fall in a crumpled heap to the floor?

SOOZ. You've been to many of these, have you?

TEZ. A few.

SOOZ. Me, too. At least this place doesn't smell of urine. Have some coffee.

MAGS. A flask? You've thought of everything. I'm Mags by the way. Short for Margaret.

SOOZ. Sooz. Horrid name for Suzanne, but it stuck.

TEZ. Teresa. Tez.

SOOZ. Hello Tez and Mags.

TEZ/MAGS. Hello Sooz!

TEZ. So how long have you both been acting?

MAGS. Oh God, like, always. The first time was a bit of an accident really, as the girl who was originally playing my part died, so they were like, you know, a bit short.

SOOZ. I've done it for ages, mainly amateur stuff. Only been trying to make a living out of it seriously for the last couple of years. Since... Well, since I realised there were other things out there. What about you?

TEZ. Got the bug when I was 7. I was in The Sound of Music.

SOOZ. Were you one of the children?

TEZ. One of the lonely goatherd. It was quite an ambitious production.

MAGS. Have you both got agents?

TEZ/SOOZ. **(wearily)** Yes!

TEZ. The only work I've had I've got myself, and still had to pay them.

SOOZ. Mine keeps putting me up for parts that are blatantly wrong. Judi Dench's mother. Teletubbies on ice. The Elephant Man.

MAGS. You are funny.

SOOZ. I'm not joking.

TEZ. I was in a commercial once. I mean, you couldn't see my face, but you'd know those pointy fingers anywhere.

MAGS. What were you pointing at?

TEZ. A new range of panty liners.

MAGS. My claim to fame is understudy to Betty Davis.

SOOZ. The American film star? No!

MAGS. No, sorry, I meant Betty Turpin. She was supposed to open a supermarket, and I was dressed as a carrot, and they said if she didn't show up, I could cut the ribbon.

TEZ. And did she turn up?

MAGS. Yes. The cow. So, what have you got planned next?

TEZ. More CVs.

SOOZ. More auditions.

TEZ/SOOZ. More rejections.

SOOZ. Looks like I'll have to get a proper job. I promised myself I wouldn't, but I may have no choice.

MAGS. I've been temping. At least there's always an end in sight.

SOOZ. I'll have to try that. Mick's losing patience.

TEZ. Mick?

SOOZ. Husband. Thank god we don't have kids to support.

MAGS. That's a shame.

SOOZ. No, it isn't, believe me. Don't want children, never have. And Mick feels the same.

TEZ. I'd love a baby.

SOOZ. Oh, babies are all right. It's just they tend to grow up! It would just be nice to be able to do a bit of proper theatre. Show these idiots what they're missing.

TEZ. I always fancied taking a play to Edinburgh. You know, to the fringe. So much commitment though. Not to mention time and money.

SOOZ. One thing I've got a lot of.

TEZ. Money?

SOOZ. Unfortunately not. Time. And commitment I suppose.

TEZ. We should do it.

SOOZ. Ha! Yes, we should. Are there many good plays for 3 women?

MAGS. My friend Penny writes plays.

TEZ. Are they any good?

MAGS. No, but she could work on them.

SOOZ. Has she had any performed?

MAGS. No, but she's very keen.

TEZ. Are they full-length?

MAGS. No, she's never actually finished any of them.

TEZ. It's not sounding too promising, is it?

SOOZ. We should just put a play on at the Edinburgh Fringe.

TEZ. You make it sound so easy.

SOOZ. Loads do it every year, why not us? Have to be doing though, it's on in August.

MAGS. What, this August?

SOOZ. Every August, but yes, I was thinking this year. Tell you what - here's my phone number. If we're not working, or not famous – even by a little bit – in say 2 months' time, phone me, and we'll do it.

MAGS. What if we're in something, but not famous?

SOOZ. Well, ring if you fancy it.

MAGS. What if we're famous, but resting?

SOOZ. That counts too.

MAGS. What if we're resting, but famous?

SOOZ. Just ring if you want to do a bloody play. That will give us time to get organised. In the meantime, ask your friend to work on a play for 3 women. We'll take the Festival by storm.

TEZ. Wouldn't that be something?

SCENE TWO – Domestic Bliss

(Penny enters – eating a large sandwich. It is probably 10am. She goes to a laptop and starts to write, with a real force. The phone rings. Penny answers it)

PENNY. Go away, I'm busy.

(She hangs up – goes back to work.)

MAGS. **(off)** Penny! It's only me.

(Mags enters)

PENNY. Stay there.

(Mags freezes in the doorway. Penny types)

“Like a frozen statue, I saw Maureen and was rooted to the spot. And although her eyes said – stay back stay back – every other inch of her cried out – Go on go on. So on I went” – you may move – “into the unknown, into the void, into the house of the only person I had ever really loved.”

MAGS. **(applauding)** That's great.

PENNY. I know, darling.

MAGS. Except the name. Maureen. Why must every play of yours have a character called Maureen?

PENNY. But Maureen is the essence. Without Maureen, there is no play.

MAGS. Can't you choose another name?

PENNY. No. Be gone. I have work to do.

MAGS. Wait, how's your latest play coming along?

PENNY. Which one, darling?

MAGS. There's more than one?

PENNY. Why yes. I am working on a few at present. 'Shimmery Silvery Blue', the story of one lady athlete's love for another; 'Now's The Limit', one female schoolteacher's crush on a female pupil; 'Springs for Zebedee' all about forbidden love in a female concentration camp; '2 Women 1 Suitcase' ...

MAGS. That's the one.

PENNY. I confess, I haven't worked on that for a few days. And it's now called 'She Lives by Lies'. Why do you ask?

MAGS. I met these other two actresses at an audition today. We were talking about taking a play to Edinburgh.

PENNY. Edinburgh? The festival of fringe? Oh, darling, I could tell you many a story about my days up there. And some of the nights!

MAGS. You've been?

PENNY. Many many years ago – it's quite an experience.

MAGS. So I've heard.

PENNY. Perhaps, perhaps, this could be the start of something big for you.

MAGS. I hope so. I really do.

PENNY. How was the audition?

MAGS. They didn't even see me.

PENNY. Philistines!

MAGS. I know.

PENNY. Still, they will know you one day. The world will soon recognise the talents and genius of Margaret D'Angelino.

MAGS. Who's that then?

PENNY. You! I thought of a new surname for you. You do like it, don't you, darling? Now leave me to write.

(Penny is busy writing)

MAGS. I'll put the kettle on.

PENNY. Nothing for me thanks. Unless you've brought chocolate hob nobs and éclairs.

MAGS. Of course I have.

PENNY. Yum! If they want me to write a play for them, they'll have to come and audition for me, you know.

MAGS. They'd love to!

(Mags exits. Penny writes.)

(Sooz enters and speaks on her mobile)

SOOZ. Hey, it's me. Have there been any messages? Well, sometimes I forget which number I've given out... I know I don't need 3 phones, but this one's so swish... Anyway, I'm staying another night. Of course I can afford it. Well, it makes sense, in case I get another audition. Look, Mick, I'll have to go, I have a call waiting. Speak to you later, yeh?

(There is no call waiting. There is probably no audition either.)

(Tez enters, carrying box of cereal. She goes to her answerphone.)

PHONE. **(automated female voice)** You have no messages.

TEZ. Really?

PHONE. You never have any messages.

TEZ. What?

PHONE. You have no messages and no life.

(She puts her hand into the box of corn flakes)

TEZ. And no bloody cereal!

(A phone rings. Sooz answers. Mags on the phone to Sooz)

SOOZ. Hello.

MAGS. Is that Sooz?

SOOZ. Speaking.

MAGS. It's Mags from the audition.

SOOZ. Mags. Hi. Were you the weepy one?

MAGS. What weepy one?

SOOZ. You were the ditzy one, weren't you?

MAGS. That's right. I found your number and thought I'd say hi.

SOOZ. Hi.

MAGS. So, you had any other work?

SOOZ. Well, I was due to appear in Cinderella with someone from Home and Away but they got fired for interfering with one of the mice. Obviously they weren't real mice, they were children dressed up, but still... They withdrew the money. You up for Edinburgh then?

MAGS. I think so, although I do have lots on.

SOOZ. Acting?

MAGS. Temping.

SOOZ. Just look on it as another temping job. It'll be over by September. Did you speak to your friend about a play?

MAGS. Yes, she's been working really hard.

SOOZ. **(enthusiastic)** Great.

MAGS. She's got 3 pages of dialogue for us.

SOOZ. **(less enthusiastic!)** Great!

MAGS. But she's really pleased with it.

SOOZ. Well, as long as she's *really* pleased.

MAGS. Look, do you want to meet up? She wants to meet you, and write something just for us.

SOOZ. Why not?

MAGS. Great. I even know what we can call ourselves. The MTs.

SOOZ. The empties?

MAGS. The MTs. It's our initials. Mags, Tez, Sooz.

SOOZ. Yes, I had worked that out. Hang on, I have a call waiting. Hello.

(Tez, speaking on the phone)

TEZ. Hi, this is Tez from the audition. When are we going to Edinburgh then?