

*Lights up on the set of a performance space. The actual stage is empty. There is a prop table to the left of the stage and a costume box. There is a table, with a phone on it to the right. A man, FLINT, in his 30s, bursts through the door into the performance space, nicely dressed up, in slacks and a fancy button up shirt wearing a jacket with his hair neatly done. He is dancing wildly while listening to his ipod. After his dance sequence, he ends up at the center of the stage, striking a final pose and faces the audience, then takes a deep breath as though taking it all in, with a large grin spread across his face.*

FLINT: You did it. You finally did it. Now everyone is going to see your work and your genius. You will be remembered.

*He takes an additional sigh of triumph, then hears the phone ring. His head turns sharply and he eyes the phone, then moves toward it slowly, unsure...He picks up the phone.*

*Throughout the conversation Flint repeatedly puts his hand on his head in exasperation, slightly messing up his hair.*

FLINT: (urgently) Hello?...What?? What do you mean you're not coming?...You were attacked? (beat)Well what kind of bear?...Yes, its important! No no-- , (pause) No I'm not insensitive. (beat) I do care about you, of course. (beat) Yes, I'm concerned for your well-being, I'm just stressed about the show. (beat) Okay. Yep, I understand. See ya later.

*He hangs up the phone looking distressed and breathing heavily, leaving his hand gripping the phone as if holding it for support.*

FLINT: (muttering) Not....coming...opening night...lost...lead...actor...(he becomes very angry and violent all of a sudden, lifting the phone up only to slam it back down whilst shouting) CRAP!

*He falls to the ground, sitting with his knees up and bent, his elbows resting on his knees with his hands on his head/face, shaking his head. He calms down somewhat, by taking deep breaths, and then slides his hands down his face and takes one more breath.*

FLINT: (he begins to stand) It's okay. Everything will be alright. I can play his part. I'll prove that I can write, direct, and act! I believe I made quite an impression in my 3<sup>rd</sup> grade play as the wise turtle. I gave that audience all kinds of wisdom! (stand)Yes. This is good, splendid! Right...well, then. Where is the rest of my cast!

*The phone rings. Flint freezes, then slowly turns to look at it. He inches towards it and slowly, gently picks it up.*

FLINT: (composed, but on edge) Hello? (beat) Yes, this is he. (beat) Right. (nodding, pursing is lips) Mmm hmm. (beat) You share a brother-in-law? Really. (beat) Of course I understand. (beat) I'll be okay. (beat)Yep. Okay then, bye.

*Flint calmly and slowly hangs the phone up. Then walks across the stage to the prop table and picks up the bear figurine and violently hurls it at the phone.*

FLINT: Ahhhhgggg! (*pointing at the phone*) You messenger of evil you! I will never go near you again!

*Flint turns towards the audience in panic and disbelief. While he delivers his next line, Anson, 20s, could be played by a woman, although is male, who has been sitting behind the prop table, stands up and rushes to the abused bear figurine, picking it up and coddling and whispering to it, carrying it back to the prop table, and then resumes his spot, sitting, unnoticed, behind the table.*

FLINT: (*getting worked up*) I can't believe it! Two more actors not coming. I didn't know they married a set of sisters...Why. Why did they have to have a brother in law? Why did that guy have to exist! (*calmer*) Hmm. Perhaps, why did that guy have to have a heart attack and need his family by his side would be a more suitable proclamation. Whatever. I am now missing three out of four cast members. It is understandable that I am a little stressed out!

*Flint puts much force on his last word "out", which is apparently frightening and causes Anson to emit a slight whimper. Flint hears it and whips around, but sees nothing. He turns back around, looks around in sharp head movements. He looks at the place by the phone where the bear figurine should have been, then at the prop table, where the bear figurine now resides. He then walks to the prop table to find Anson.*

FLINT: (*calmly*) Hey Anson. How long you been sittin' there?

ANSON: (*whilst crawling out from behind the table and standing*) Oh, only for a couple hours. (*he looks at the prop table*) I had to watch the propy-props (*he smiles matronly and strokes the prop nearest him*).

FLINT: Uh-huh. That's not weird. Umm...did you, er, happen to see my dancing?

ANSON: Uh huh.

FLINT: Right, well...you know, excitement and...whatnot...(Anson nods) (*after a moment of awkward silence*) Anyway. So, I take it you heard me on the phone as well? And are aware of the current...misfortunes?

ANSON: (*nodding and picking up the moose stuffed animal*) Yes.

FLINT: Well, I think you can help me fix it! I am missing three out of four actors. I can take on one of the parts, but there are two more...and I want you to be in the play.

*Anson freezes up, wide eyed, staring at Flint.*

FLINT: You can have the smallest part. Well, second smallest...but the smallest that is missing an actor! I'll bet once you come out of your shyness that there is a real star deep, deep down inside of you.

ANSON: Uhh...

FLINT: Lovely! Okay, just one more person.

*Then, a voice is heard from somewhere offstage, Flint cannot tell where it is coming from.*

BARRY: (off) An actor, you say?

*Flint and Anson freeze. Flint slowly looks around.*

BARRY: You need an actor?!?

FLINT: Umm, yes. But, as creepastic as this is, would ya mind coming out into my view so we can speak like normal humans?

*BARRY, 40s-60s, bearded, the janitor, emerges grandly and as he does, all the lights go out. Anson emits a very high pitched scream. Then the lights promptly come back on while Anson is still screaming, and so he stops. Both Flint and Barry stare at him, and he stares at them for a moment, then suddenly snaps his head back down to the moose as he pets/cuddles it, as if nothing has happened. Flint looks back at Barry.*

BARRY: Sorry, I bumped the electrical switch whilst making my grand entrance.

FLINT: Ah.

BARRY: Yes. (moment of awkward silence) So! You say you need another actor?? For the show tonight??

*Barry is walking toward Flint.*

FLINT: Yes...

BARRY: I can help you. Theatre is an old passion of mine. I can act, sing, dance, anything! Would you like a demonstration?

FLINT: Uhh...

BARRY: (takes this as a yes)(begins as romeo)

If I profane with my unworhiest hand  
This holy shrine, the gentle fine is this:  
My lips, two blushing pilgrims, ready stand  
To smooth that rough touch with a tender kiss.

*(switches to juliet)*

Good pilgrim, you do wrong your hand too much,  
Which mannerly devotion shows in this;  
For saints have hands that pilgrims' hands do touch,  
And palm to palm is holy palmers' kiss.

FLINT: Okay, that's enough, that was just lovely--

BARRY: Or a song? You want to hear a song!

*(He begins "One Day More" from Les Mis.)*

One day more!  
Another day, another destiny.  
This never-ending road to--

FLINT: Okay, that's great too, but--

BARRY: I know there's no singing in your play, but I thought, in the spirit of change, maybe we could add some!

FLINT: *(frustrated)* No! Please, shut up. As delightful as your singing is, I really think that making more changes besides replacing three out of four cast members for the producers preview is a bit much. However, I think you can help me. I'd love for you to be in the play.

*Barry puts his hand to his heart, slowly, his mouth opens, and he begins to tear up.*

BARRY: You...will not...regret this.

*He lunges at Flint, trapping him in a bear hug and forcing him backwards into Anson who then drops his Moose.*

ANSON: *(wide-eyed, panicked)* Pedro!

*Anson scoops Pedro the moose up and rushes him back to the prop table, whispering reassurances to him such as "it'll be alright, you're gonna be okay".*

FLINT: Sorry, Anson.

BARRY: Yeah...sorry...

*Anson shoots a very angry glance back at them.*

FLINT: Right, well then. It looks like we'll be okay for tonight!

*The moment Flint finishes saying this, GABRIELLE, an elaborately and nicely dressed actress, storms through the door.*

GABRIELLE: Good evening, Flint.

FLINT: Ah, hello Gabrielle. Glad you're here, we've had some problems with the rest of the cast...

GABRIELLE: Actually, Flint, I've only come to tell you that I am no longer available to partake in the performance tonight.

FLINT: (*stunned*) What?!?

GABRIELLE: Yes, there is a rather fabulous party that I need to attend. So sorry.

FLINT: What?!? No! Are you kidding? You can't go to a party, you have a performance!

GABRIELLE: Yes. And that is precisely why I decided to go to the party. You take everything I do for granted! You don't understand how important I am! You don't appreciate me! And you don't appreciate women!

FLINT: What are you talking about?!?

GABRIELLE: What am I talking about? What am I talking about?!? I'll tell you what I'm talking about! I'm talking about the fact that you only wrote ONE PART for a female AND it's the smallest part in the show! That's how you don't appreciate women. And you don't even care about me! You spelled my freaking name wrong in the program! (*she takes the program out of her bag*)

FLINT: What do you mean?

GABRIELLE: This! (*she walks to him shoving the program in his face*) You didn't even spell my name right! GABRIEL?? GABRIEL?? Now it looks like all the characters are men! I'm not a guy! I'm Gabrielle! I am a strong woman, and I am screwing you over! Good bye!

*She storms out. The three men stand silently in shock. After a few moments...*

BARRY: Devil woman!

*Anson covers the ears of Pedro.*

FLINT: (*he walks away alone, hands in his hair*) Oh my god. Oh my god oh my god oh my god! (*sinking to the ground*) What am I gonna do?!?

BARRY: (*as he walks over to Flint, and puts his hand on Flint's shoulder*) Don't worry my young friend. We will figure this out.

FLINT: No. No, we can't. This is a sign. I can't believe it. The night the producers are supposed to see my performance, everything goes wrong.

ANSON: The props are all here...

FLINT: That's just great, Anson. But we kind of need the actors too. (*Anson is offended*) This just isn't going to work. I have to call the producers.

BARRY: Don't do this, son! The power of theatre will fix all things!

FLINT: (*as he walks over to the phone*) Oh, shut up, Barry.

*Flint picks up the phone and dials.*

FLINT: Hi, this is Flint Amherst. Yeah, the writer/director. I'm calling about the show tonight, I've had some problems with cast members not coming, and I was wondering if we could postpone it...Oh...really? No other time? (*beat*) Okay, then. I suppose I'll see you in a few hours. (*beat*) Thanks. Bye.

*Flint hangs up the phone forcefully.*

FLINT: DAMNIT.

BARRY: What's wrong?

FLINT: They won't watch it another time! They said this was my only chance and they won't reschedule because it's not important enough.

BARRY: So...what's the plan?

FLINT: Well, I agreed to do it anyway. I need this show to be seen! I'm hoping that, despite losing my entire cast, the writing will still come through and they'll see that it's special. And I will be remembered.

BARRY: Ah. Well, I'm sure we will!

*There is a knock on the door. All look over at it.*

FLINT: (*as he walks quickly to the door*) Maybe Gabrielle's come back!

*He opens the door in an excited hurry, to reveal not Gabrielle, but RALPH, an awkward teen pizza delivery boy, with a pizza.*

FLINT: Oh, hello, there, Ralph.

RALPH: Hi Mr. Amherst! Here's your pizza, the usual.

FLINT: (*eying him*) Thanks...(*he begins to pull Ralph inside*) Say, Ralph...do you want to be in a play?

RALPH: Not really.

FLINT: But, you've been here every night! You've seen us rehearse! You're the only one that could do it! And I'll pay you. At least twenty bucks.

RALPH: I'll take thirty.

FLINT: Alrighty then...thirty it is! Welcome to the cast!

RALPH: Thanks...what do I have to do?

FLINT: Umm...how do you feel about playing a woman?

RALPH: Not good.

FLINT: Well, that's okay. Anson can play the woman, he's kind of a woman anyway.

ANSON: What?

FLINT: What?

*Anson looks disgruntled, and goes back to petting Pedro.*

FLINT: Alright, so. We don't have very much time before we open, so we should start rehearsing now...

BARRY: Just tell me what to do! And I shall do it!

FLINT: Okay...First, you might wanna tone it down a bit there, Barry.

BARRY: But of course, my young leader. Speak the directions, and I shall follow them!

FLINT: Okay...Great. So, Barry, you're playing Beardsley. Ralph, you're Osbert, I'm playing Morven, and Anson, you're playing Luella. Let me give each of you a script...

*He goes over to the table and picks up a pile of scripts.*

RALPH: Are we gonna have to learn all the lines right now?

FLINT: That would be ideal...

BARRY: I already know them all.

FLINT: Of course you do. And Anson is pretty familiar with the script as well. Its just you Ralph, that doesn't really know it...so, we may have to make some adjustments.

BARRY: I will take on some of his lines.

FLINT: You may have to.

RALPH: Mmkay. As long as I still get my thirty bucks.

FLINT: You will. Okay, here is a script for each of you, start looking it over, and I will get the costumes, so we can start making it more realistic.

*Flint goes over to the costume box by the prop table, and begins to take costume pieces out, then hands them to their new wearers. Everyone else begins looking over the script, Anson sits down, Barry does some vocal warm ups, Ralph stands awkwardly.*

*Blackout, then lights back up and some costume pieces are being worn, and someone is standing center stage with a sign that says "1 hour later".*

*Flint is standing alone, watching Anson, Barry, and Ralph acting out a scene.*

FLINT: Okay, so, this time, when you read the scene, Ralph, you have to remember that you are deeply in love with Luella. Anson, you are also in love with him but sad because you have to tell him you can't be with him. Barry, you are not in the scene, and therefore need to get away from the stage at this time.

*Barry reluctantly moves away from the stage, and does some physical warm ups.*

FLINT: *(to Ralph and Anson)* Begin.

RALPH: *(as Osbert)* Oh, my beautiful Luella, how joyous I am to see your beautiful face.

ANSON: *(as Luella)* And I am joyous to see that you are still alive, but at the same time, I am saddened, for--

FLINT: Okay, wait. Anson. First off, I'd like to say that you're doing a great job, and thank you so much for taking the female part. However, because you have graciously taken on that part, you must now act as though you are a female...and that means making your voice higher. So let's go from your line, with a more feminine voice! Action!

*As Anson says the line again, he starts off the same, but Flint motions for him to make his voice higher, and so he keeps making it higher and higher as he continues to speak.*

ANSON: *(as Luella)* And I am joyous to see that you are still alive, but at the same time, I am saddened, for troubled times lie ahead for us.

RALPH: *(as Osbert)* Whatever do you mean, my love?

ANSON: *(as Luella)* My father has refused to give his consent, so we cannot marry!

RALPH: (as Osbert) Noo! That can't be true--

BARRY: (as Beardsley) But it is! (he runs to Luella dramatically) You will never marry my daughter!

*Ralph and Anson are confused, as the lines Barry is speaking are not in the script.*

FLINT: Umm, Barry? That's not in the script. You're not supposed to enter until the next page.

BARRY: Yes, but I thought, this would also be a good time for me to enter! Its more exciting, and also, Ralph would have less lines to try to memorize. We could just cut the next page up to my entrance!

RALPH: That's chill with me.

FLINT: Are you sure?

RALPH: Yeah, I really don't even think I'll be able to remember these lines...the less the better.

BARRY: There you go!

FLINT: Well, alright, then. Proceed.

BARRY: (as Beardsley) You will never marry my daughter!

*There is another blackout, then lights back up. A few more costume pieces are being worn, everyone looks more tired, Flint's hair is more messy, and another person is standing center stage with sign that says, "Another hour later".*

*Flint is standing alone, still directing. Ralph is sitting off to the side, looking bored, and Anson and Barry are in the middle of a scene.*

BARRY: (as Beardsley) What do you think you are doing?

ANSON: (as Luella) I am running away, father. I can't live without Osbert! He is my true love!

BARRY: (as Beardsley) No! I will never let you go with him! Even if I have to kill him with my bare hands!

FLINT: Okay, wait. Barry, that is not what the script says. You are supposed to let her go.

BARRY: But, its so much more dramatic this way! Because then there could be a fight scene between Beardsley and Osbert! I am very advanced in stage combat, with over ten years of training and--

FLINT: No! No no no no no! You need to stop this, right now!

BARRY: Stop what?

FLINT: Trying to change everything! Maybe I don't want it to be more dramatic! I worked on this script for five years! I just want you to perform it the way I wrote it!

BARRY: *(giving in, with understanding)* Of course. I am so sorry I caused you trouble, my young friend. I have failed you as an actor. I will perform it as you wish, from now on.

FLINT: Thank you. Go on.

BARRY: *(as Beardsley)* What do you think you are doing?

ANSON: *(as Luella)* I am running away, father. I can't live without Osbert! He is my true love!

BARRY: *(as Beardsley)* Well then, my child. I am sorry to have caused you such pain and trouble. I had no idea he meant so much to you. I will approve the marriage.

ANSON: *(as Luella)* Thank you, father!

*Another blackout. Lights come back up on a scene between Ralph and Anson with Flint directing, Barry off to the side. Another person is center stage with a sign that says, "One More Hour Later".*

*Ralph and Anson are being directed in a scene.*

ANSON: *(as Luella)* Oh, my love! I am so happy that we can be together at last!

RALPH: *(as Osbert)* I as well! We are going to have such a wonderful life together-

*Just then, Flint rushes on with a gun and shoots Ralph.*

FLINT: *(as Morven)* BAM!

RALPH: Wait...what? I die?

ANSON: He dies?

FLINT: Yeah...

RALPH: Are you kidding me?

FLINT: What?

ANSON: It's so sad!

BARRY: Exactly! It's so deliciously tragic!

RALPH: It's not "deliciously tragic", it's just mean. How are they gonna have a happy ending if Osbert is dead?

FLINT: They're not...There was never going to be a happy ending. Morven kills Osbert because he's in love with Luella, and Beardsley has already died, and so Luella has to marry Morven and live out her days in sadness. The last line is when Morven says, "I have won".

RALPH: WHAT?

FLINT: Didn't you read through the script?

RALPH: No.

FLINT: Well there's your problem. If you'd have just read to the end, you would have been warned.