

# CANNIBALS

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By **R.J. Colleary**

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**SYNOPSIS:** What happens when your support system – those who best understand your hopes, dreams, and struggles – is also your biggest competition? Let’s call to order a meeting of the misleadingly named “United State of Actresses,” an L.A.-based group of middle-aged women hanging on by their fingernails with clashing personalities, agendas, and perfumes. They gather weekly to drink coffee, eat doughnuts, and collectively snark at the sorry state of Hollywood and usually one another.

We open as “U.S.A.” veterans Linda, Mo, and Elizabeth welcome newbie (and medicinally-enhanced) Carole into their midst. This is less career move for Carole and more treatment for her agoraphobia, which was triggered years earlier by a nasty work fiasco with a nasty Hollywood icon.

When the group unexpectedly receives an offer to re-start their collectively stalled careers, there is jubilation until the proverbial other shoe drops: in life everything comes with a price, and perhaps nowhere is that price higher than Hollywood.

So...how low will they go? How much of their integrity will they compromise for success? (Trick question! The answer is ALL OF IT! After all, IT’S HOLLYWOOD!)

### CAST OF CHARACTERS

(1 MAN, 6 WOMEN)

DONNA (f).....Age unknown, and good luck finding out. One-time international superduperstar now living off the royalties of her celebrity. A first-ballot Diva Hall of Famer. (71 lines)

- LINDA (f).....Early forties, group leader/den mother. Worries about everyone but herself. Standing map-less at the life/career crossroads. Commutes between the suburbs and denial. *(167 lines)*
- MO (f).....Forty-something, upbeat wife and mother, “full-figured” niche performer who works whenever somebody needs to hire “the funny fat one.” *(129 lines)*
- ELIZABETH (f).....Forty-ish, intense self-obsessed “artiste” whose life is dedicated to the business of her craft, the politics of her craft...generally, the craft of her craft. *(137 lines)*
- CAROLE (f).....Forty-esque, smart enough to realize the phone will not magically ring, but infused with enough meds to wait next to it just in case. *(136 lines)*
- WALTER (m).....“Sixties director” in every sense of the phrase. A modest man with modest talent. Spends most of his waking hours serving the needs of his star wife, Donna. *(131 lines)*
- KIMMI (f).....Early twenties, Midwestern look and values. Ambitious Theatre major at UCLA. Beautiful, talented, smarter than she looks – a threatening combination to all of the above. *(51 lines)*

# CANNIBALS

## PROPERTIES

### *ACT ONE, SCENE 1B*

- Evidence of a male presence – ie. racing bike, golf clubs, basketball, tennis racquet
- Box of doughnuts
- Articles torn from a magazine
- Index cards

### *ACT ONE, SCENE 2A*

- Listing of the Four Categories of Show Business. Could be printed on a dry-erase board, chalkboard, poster board, etc.

### *ACT ONE, SCENE 2B*

- Assorted photos/resumes

### *ACT ONE, SCENE 3B*

- Four sets of sides
- To-go coffee cup, bag, muffin

### *ACT ONE, SCENE 4B*

- Sheets of typed paper (the rehearsal schedule)
- Newspaper

### *ACT ONE, SCENE 7*

- DVD
- Bottle of champagne

### *ACT TWO, SCENE 1*

- Doughnut
- Doughnut box

### *ACT TWO, SCENE 3B*

- Purse
- Four sets of sides
- Camera w/tripod

ACT TWO, SCENES 5A-5D

- Oscar-like statuette (just need one)

ACT TWO, SCENE 6

- Carole's bottle of pills

ACT TWO, SCENE 8

- Linda's cell phone

**PRODUCTION NOTES**

*Cannibals* was created to be production-friendly, and to be performed as high-tech or low-tech as circumstances require.

In the original Los Angeles production, the primary set (Linda's Living Room) covered about 2/3 of the stage. It doesn't need to be much fancier than a sofa, two chairs, and a coffee table. The remaining 1/3 alternated between The Casting Office and The Screening Room, both of which were merely comprised of folding chairs.

During the Interview scenes, the Interviewer was placed upstage and the Interviewees were seated or standing downstage and moved on and off stage quickly. For the Screening Room Scene, we simply sat the actors facing the audience as if it were the movie screen and flickered the lights to imply a projector.

Because set changes were minimal, and to keep the pace up, we used spotlights to isolate the actors during their monologues. In most cases, the goal was to go down on one and up on the next simultaneously, leaving no (or at best, little) time in between scenes.

This did lead to some challenges in terms of costume changes, which did lead to more than one high-speed collision offstage in the dark. ☺ It's probably easier, and less dangerous, to have the actors do some simple layering except where noted.

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There is a reference to a visible “male presence” in terms of props at Linda’s that later disappear between scenes. These are negotiable, but just need to be easily movable.

Before curtain and during intermission, we played a lot of Hollywood-themed music. The song “Hooray for Hollywood” was the final song pre-curtain and led directly into the show’s opening monologue.

DO NOT COPY

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1A**

**AT RISE:**

*The stage is BLACK. "Hooray for Hollywood" plays. Spotlight up on DONNA.*

**DONNA:** "Hooray for Hollywood?" REALLY? Let's think about that for a moment, shall we? What IS Hollywood? Well let's start right there. Holly is a bush. It's a shrub. It's not a tree. There is no "wood" that comes from holly. So right off the bat, Hollywood is a lie. But it's a sexy lie, isn't it? A seductive, slinky, sweaty-in-a-good-way flirtatious tease of a lie. Hollywood makes you want it. And once you want something – REALLY want it – you need it. And once you need something – REALLY need it – it owns you.

*BLACKOUT.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 1B**

*Spotlight up on CAROLE. Bad body language. Arms folded. Legs crossed. Pissed off.*

**CAROLE:** I'm not doing it.

**LINDA:** *(In the dark.)* It's all right. Your first meeting is your toughest.

**CAROLE:** I'm not saying it.

**MO:** *(In the dark.)* Speak your truth. We won't judge you. We've all been there.

**CAROLE:** Oh, fine. My name is Carole, and I'm...I'm...I'm an actress.

**LINDA/MO:** Hi, Carole!

*Lights up to reveal we are in LINDA's living room. Seating points at a TV. The room shows a male presence: a man's racing bike mounted on a wall, a set of golf clubs, a basketball, and two tennis racquets. LINDA and MO are sitting on the sofa, an empty space next to MO.*

**LINDA:** You did it. You okay?

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**CAROLE:** You know what? This blows. I mean, a lot of things blow. But this? This is special. This sets a whole new paradigm of blowage.

**MO:** I remember my first meeting. I puked.

**LINDA:** We do this every month.

**MO:** Blew chunks, tossed cookies, prayed to the porcelain god.

**LINDA:** We SHARE. Not puke.

**CAROLE:** Really? If I were good at sharing, I'd still be married.

**MO:** Oh! You're... (*Sotto.*) divorced.

**CAROLE:** (*Sotto.*) Yes. Shhh.

**MO:** We're married, so we'll get along just fine so long as you don't try to steal our husbands.

**LINDA:** Mo's kidding, aren't you, Mo? Say you're kidding. Say it now.

**MO:** Kidding!

**LINDA:** Thank you. Congrats, Carole, you're the newest member of "The United State of Actresses!"

**CAROLE:** That's the whole initiation? I don't get paddled?

**MO:** Only if you try to steal our husbands. (*Off LINDA's look.*) Kidding? (*LINDA nods.*) Kidding.

**CAROLE:** Look, I'll be straight with you. I am so not happy to be here. But it was either this or group therapy. And in group therapy you have to actually care about the people, so I picked this.

**LINDA:** We care about each other here.

**CAROLE:** (*Concerned.*) You do? Is that mandatory?

**LINDA:** Well, no...I suppose caring about us is optional.

**CAROLE:** Okay, good.

*ELIZABETH enters in a bit of a tizzy, balancing coffee and donuts.*

**ELIZABETH:** Sorry I'm late! I swear, when I got on the 405 I was in my twenties. Was that freeway built over some ancient Indian burial ground? So there's another five hours of my life I'll never get back, and then I had to go to Krispy Kreme to pickup a dozen fixes of doughy glazed death. (*Kisses LINDA.*) Hello. (*Kisses CAROLE.*) Hello. (*She grudgingly acknowledges MO with a grunt, then realizes re:CAROLE:*) I just kissed a complete stranger.

**MO:** Oh, is it Saturday night at two a.m. already?

**ELIZABETH:** My chakras and I choose to ignore that.

**LINDA:** Elizabeth, this is Carole.

**MO:** (*Sotto to ELIZABETH.*) Divorcee.

**ELIZABETH:** Welcome, Carole. I'm Elizabeth.

**MO:** (*Sotto to CAROLE.*) Never married.

**LINDA:** Elizabeth owns an acting school for children.

**ELIZABETH:** Of all ages. Post-fetus to pre-adult. Like my ad says, "You'll Learn to Act, That's Our Pact." Referrals welcome. I'll get a list from you after.

**CAROLE:** A list? Of – ?

**LINDA:** Elizabeth, take a seat, let's get started.

*ELIZABETH looks, but:*

**ELIZABETH:** (*Pointedly.*) I don't see anywhere to sit.

**CAROLE:** What's wrong with – ?

**MO:** Let's all move over, shall we? (*MO moves over to the chair.*

*CAROLE slides over, although she has no idea why. LINDA too.*

*ELIZABETH sits, now as far away from MO as possible. As we will see, ELIZABETH NEVER sits next to MO.)*

**CAROLE:** Do we do that every meeting, too?

**LINDA:** Yes. Carole was just sharing, and –

**ELIZABETH:** Carole. May I call you Carole?

**CAROLE:** Well, yes, since that's my –

**ELIZABETH:** Carole, I must ask. This is such a small town, and we know all the actors in our age range...why haven't we met?

**CAROLE:** Well, it's been awhile since I've been out.

**LINDA:** Out on auditions.

**CAROLE:** Out of my house.

**MO:** And when you say awhile, you mean –

**CAROLE:** I dunno. Three, maybe four...

**ELIZABETH:** Days?

**CAROLE:** Years.

**LINDA:** Years.

**MO:** As awhtles go, that's a mother.

**CAROLE:** My dopamine? It's unbalanced. Too much means schizophrenia, not enough causes Parkinson's. I mean, please, which is the frying pan and which is the fire?

**LINDA:** This is what it looks like when I change the subject.

**ELIZABETH:** How fun, can we skip that? I need to share, and I have to leave in nine minutes.

**CAROLE:** You just got here.

**ELIZABETH:** True, oh observant one. But I'm meeting a friend of a friend who might be casting a web series at Starbucks. When you get a chance like that, you can't just say "Thanks anyway!" Eight minutes!

**CAROLE:** I have an idea. Why don't you just go ahead?

**ELIZABETH:** Great. I am at my professional crossroads. I am THIS close. It's time for me to re-invent. Starting with my name.

**LINDA:** What's wrong with Elizabeth?

**ELIZABETH:** Well, apparently in Swahili it means, "She Who Will Not Work."

**CAROLE:** And you think changing your name will get you jobs? Does this planet you live on have its own gravitational pull?

**ELIZABETH:** Fine! I give up! I quit. No, I don't. Six minutes.

**LINDA:** All right, before we start I have something for everyone...  
(*Handing things out.*) Elizabeth, the phone number for the awesome-and-single new photographer for your new head shots; Mo, saw this article on LA's best lunch spots to "accidentally" run into agents better than your own; and Carole, this was a guess. My Aunt Ruby's recipe for borscht.

**CAROLE:** Actually, beets could cause an interaction with my antidepressants.

**LINDA:** Oh. (*Re: a different index card.*) Aunt Hazel's cornbread.

**CAROLE:** I hate cornbread. (*Happily.*) But what the hey, it's not like I can taste anything anyway! (*They exchange index cards.*)

**LINDA:** Well, then, meeting's called to order.

**MO:** Right after the ritualistic distribution of the Krispy Kreme.

**LINDA:** Yes, of course.

**MO:** I don't want one. But I'll have one anyway.

**LINDA:** All right, let's get started. Call to order with the group motto. One, two, three!

**LINDA/ELIZABETH/MO:** "I act, therefore I am!"

**CAROLE:** Oh, God. I'm really doing this.

**MO:** I'll read the minutes from the last meeting.

**ELIZABETH:** Motion to table the minutes.

**LINDA:** Second. All in favor?

**LINDA/ELIZABETH:** *(Raising hands.)* Aye.

**MO:** Why do I even keep minutes when we always table them anyway?

**ELIZABETH:** Motion for Mo to cease and desist with rhetorical questions.

**LINDA:** All in favor?

**LINDA/ELIZABETH:** *(Raising their hands.)* Aye.

**LINDA:** Carole, feel free to vote.

**ELIZABETH:** Yes, it might make you feel like you are a living, breathing organism.

**CAROLE:** Aye.

**LINDA:** Now. New business. Monthly speaker.

**MO:** *(To CAROLE.)* It's networking. We bring in industry people who are in a position to hire. We alternate. Last month I brought my favorite casting director.

**LINDA:** Yes. Mr. Narcolepsy.

**CAROLE:** Oh dear.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah. Bad meeting. Bad, bad, meeting. Bad. Wow.

**LINDA:** This month, Elizabeth is bringing the speaker.

**ELIZABETH:** That's right. I met a director named Walter Something who's prepping a feature.

**LINDA:** Excellent. All in favor, say —

*BLACKOUT.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2A

*Spotlight up on DONNA. PowerPoint presentation.*

**DONNA:** Pay attention. This information could prove useful. Everyone in show business falls into one of four categories. (*A beat.*) Type One: "I'm Great, You're Great." These are the most well-adjusted people. They are generous of spirit, supportive, and they never work. (*A beat.*) Type Two: "You're Great, I Suck." These folks are popular, because they make you feel superior to them. Which, of course, you are. (*A beat.*) Type Three: "I Suck, You Suck." Human downers who see life as ninety years of pre-death pain. Although they appear suicidal, sadly, they never kill themselves. They just make you want to kill YOURself. They tend to be stand-up comics. (*A beat.*) And finally, Type Four: "I'm Great, You Suck." The self-centered, the self-righteous, the self-aggrandizing. They are everything that's wrong about Hollywood and everybody hates them. Because they own everything. So... which one are you?

*BLACKOUT.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2B

*Lights up in LINDA's living room. MO, ELIZABETH, and CAROLE are there. LINDA enters with a stack of picture/resumes. She starts placing them around the room.*

**LINDA:** Okay, so what do we know about the film this Walter  
Something is prepping?

**ELIZABETH:** Nothing.

**MO:** I'd be perfect for it.

**ELIZABETH:** How could you be perfect if I'm available? I am THIS  
close!

**LINDA:** Wait, wait. We don't know ANYTHING about it?

**ELIZABETH:** He was very hush-hush about the whole thing. Didn't  
want to talk about it. Mr. Top Secret.

*Doorbell.*

**LINDA:** Girls! Subtlety, please.

**MO:** So I guess a lap dance is out of the question?

*WALTER ENTERS, carrying a satchel.*

**WALTER:** Hi, Walter Fanning.

**LINDA:** Welcome, Walter, thanks for coming. I'm –

*CAROLE and MO swoop in. LINDA gets pushed out of the way.*

**CAROLE:** Carole!

**MO:** Mo.

**CAROLE:** Carole!

**MO:** He heard you. You probably recognize me from all the TV work I've done.

**WALTER:** *(No.)* Um, well, maybe.

**CAROLE:** Carole!

*WALTER escapes-slash-enters.*

**WALTER:** Elizabeth!

**ELIZABETH:** Walter! *(She crosses to him. Air kisses.)*

**WALTER:** Oooh! Sorry! Did I actually touch you?

**ELIZABETH:** It was an accident.

*LINDA clears her throat. ELIZABETH ignores her. WALTER gets it.*

**WALTER:** Walter.

**LINDA:** Linda. Welcome. Elizabeth has told us a lot about you, and I'm sure she's told you a lot about us.

**WALTER:** Actually, she talked mostly about herself.

**LINDA:** Here's where I try to look surprised. *(She does.)*

**CAROLE:** So, Walter...how did you meet Elizabeth?

**WALTER:** It was one of those cosmic things. I was just sitting there, minding my own business, and she hit on me.

**ELIZABETH:** I can't help it. I have a thing for men reading scripts.

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**MO:** Or wearing shoes.

**LINDA:** All right, well, we always begin these meetings with the resume exchange and just get it over with. That way whomever needs a job just hands it over and we move on. How's that?

**WALTER:** Sounds great.

**LINDA:** Wonderful. One, two, three –

**ALL:** Here! *(They all extend resume simultaneously. Then:)* Oh.

**MO:** We're the ones looking for work. You have a job.

**WALTER:** I do?

**CAROLE:** You're prepping a feature.

**WALTER:** I am? *(They look at ELIZABETH.)*

**ELIZABETH:** Don't look at me, he said he was a director and was reading a script. *(They look at WALTER.)*

**WALTER:** That's true. *(They look at ELIZABETH.)*

**ELIZABETH:** And when I asked about it, he said it was nothing and pushed it away. So how do you explain that, huh? *(They look at WALTER.)*

**WALTER:** The script was on the table when I got there. Someone forgot it. *(They look at ELIZABETH.)*

**ELIZABETH:** Oh. Heh.

**MO:** Walter, I love your resume.

**WALTER:** Thank you. I've been pretty lucky over the years, been able to do a lot of different –

**MO:** I meant the paper stock. It's very thick. Substantial. Great color, too. Is this "Bone"? Maybe I should go with Bone.

**WALTER:** Uh...

**CAROLE:** Wow, look at all these shows you worked on. I've never heard of any of them. *(WALTER changes the subject.)*

**WALTER:** Ah, Linda, do I know you from somewhere?

**LINDA:** Oh. No, no, I don't think so.

**MO:** Well don't give up so easily. The gym, maybe?

*WALTER's not sure.*

**MO:** Supermarket, cleaners, adult bookstore? *(By now, LINDA is holding WALTER's resume nearly over her face to avert his stare.)*

**WALTER:** Phunny!

**MO:** Yeah, "adult bookstore" is always good for a yuk.

**WALTER:** Felicia Phunny. From The Phunny Phamily. That was you.

**CAROLE:** From that old TV show?

**ELIZABETH:** The glasses and the braids and the braces? The ugly one!

**LINDA:** I wasn't ugly. I was twelve.

**MO:** You never told us about this.

**LINDA:** It's embarrassing! The show was a joke. They spelled "Phunny Phamily" with PH's. PH's are not funny! K's are funny, everybody knows that.

**CAROLE:** Come on, say it for us.

**LINDA:** Say...what?

**WALTER:** You know. "It." Your catchphrase.

**MO:** I always wanted a catchphrase.

**ELIZABETH:** You have one. It's "If nobody else wants this, I'll eat it."

*MO glares at her.*

**LINDA:** All right, fine. Just so we can move on. I'll say it. *(They all look thrilled with expectation. LINDA hates this. With a lisp.)* "Oh, you're so silly." *(They all clap.)*

**WALTER:** Love the lisp.

**LINDA:** *(With a lisp.)* It was the braces.

**WALTER:** *(Off LINDA's resume.)* Emmy nomination?

**LINDA:** The last season. The episode where I got my braces off. In the 70s. THAT was a Sweeps show.

**WALTER:** Ah yes, I remember that. A "very special" Phunny Phamily.

**MO:** You were nominated? You never told us that either.

**LINDA:** *(Shakes the resume.)* Well, it's right on here! Nobody in this town reads!

**ELIZABETH:** An Emmy nomination. How wonderful to be recognized by your peers, write an acceptance speech, and then lose, live, on national television. Good times.

**LINDA:** That's not what it's like at all. How can you feel like a loser when you're included in a select group of the finest actors in our business? You feel honored. Not bitter. *(A pause as they let that sink in...)*

**WALTER:** Who won that year, anyway?

**LINDA:** Some dumb blonde with fake boobs.

*They nod knowingly. BLACKOUT.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 3A**

*Spotlight up on DONNA.*

**DONNA:** Hollywood operates on only three principles: fear, money, and the fear of not getting the money. In this town, Actors act, Writers write, Directors direct, and Producers – well, no one's quite sure what producers do. Of these, only actors are rejected face-to-face. Writers don't sit there while their scripts are read. Directors don't hang out while their reels are watched. But that's what actors do, every day. And they have to be civil to each other. Now THAT'S acting.

*BLACKOUT.*

**ACT ONE, SCENE 3B**

*Lights up in a corner of a casting office's waiting area. There are seven chairs lined up. LINDA, holding sides, enters and looks O.S.*

**LINDA:** Rita!? You're up for this part? I might as well just go home! *(She listens as RITA is obviously returning the volley. Dismissing her compliments with a wave.)* Oh, YOU! That's so nice! You should be my agent! Say hi to Tom!

*LINDA sits as CAROLE ENTERS. She holds sides, as well as a Starbucks cup and a small bag with a muffin inside.*

**CAROLE:** Wow, it's exciting to get out of the house. I'd forgotten how big the outdoors is. It just goes on forever.

**LINDA:** Can you believe this? Rita Fucking Wilson is here. She has Tom Hanks at home, but nooooooooooooo, that's not enough, she has to have THIS little job, too.

**CAROLE:** I have just the thing to make you feel better. (*She takes the muffin out of the bag, shows it – then keeps the muffin and hands LINDA the empty bag.*) Breathe into this.

*LINDA does. MO, also holding sides, enters.*

**MO:** So my audition was your audition and your audition. (*Squints.*) Is that Rita Fucking Wilson?

*LINDA starts to breathe quickly into the bag again. ELIZABETH enters, holding sides.*

**ELIZABETH:** Whoa, there's a lotta menopause in this room.

**LINDA:** All these women in their forties and fifties, dying to play the sexless District Attorney.

**MO:** Too old to be the mom, too young to be the grandma.

**ELIZABETH:** In my case, too sizzling hot to be the grandma.

**CAROLE:** Sizzling grandmas scare me a little. So do clowns. There's something dark about them. And little people give me the willies.

**ELIZABETH:** (*Pointedly.*) I'm going to sit down now. (*They all look. The only available seat is next to MO. LINDA and MO exchange seats so ELIZABETH can now sit on the end next to LINDA. She does.*)

**MO:** (*Surveying the room.*) We're never going to get this. (*LINDA sighs. Gathers herself.*)

**LINDA:** Okay, now wait just one second. Attitude, ladies. True, we can't all book it, but one of us could.

**ELIZABETH:** Yeah, me! Claws down, girls. Don't hate!

**MO:** You know what they say: there is no "Liz" in "team."

**LINDA:** Come on. Group hug. (*She opens her arms to embrace them. CAROLE backs off.*)

**CAROLE:** No, no, no! No touching! Impersonal handshakes okay. But certainly no group hugs! Not now, not ever, never, no.

**LINDA:** That's all right. The important thing is that we're all hereto support each other in our own way.

**MO/CAROLE:** Okay. (*LINDA looks pointedly at the silent ELIZABETH.*)

**ELIZABETH:** I was thinking it! Okay!

**LINDA:** The motto. Quietly though so as not to embarrass ourselves publicly.

**LINDA/MO/CAROLE/ELIZABETH:** "I act, therefore I am!"

*They all sit back to look at their sides. KIMMI enters. She speaks to someone O.S.*

**KIMMI:** Sure, I'll be over here. *(KIMMI takes open seat next to CAROLE. She notices they're reading sides.)* Everyone inside is really nice. *(They nod politely as they read.)* Very friendly and supportive. *(They nod politely as they read.)* I am SO stupid. *(They nod politely as they read.)* I don't even belong here.

**MO:** Hey, don't get down on yourself.

**LINDA:** That's right. Keep trying and keep learning.

**KIMMI:** No, I mean I REALLY don't belong here. Yesterday I got a voicemail. But I dropped my iPhone last week, and now it cuts off the first half of every word. So the message starts out "Mi Oove N Tion Row." Which I figured out meant, "Kimmi, you have an audition tomorrow."

**CAROLE:** There are two things every actress in this town needs: a good GPS and a good vibrator. *(Off their looks.)* And you don't really need the GPS.

**ELIZABETH:** *(To KIMMI.)* Come on, cheer us up. Tell us more dumb stuff.

**KIMMI:** Okay, so the rest of the message I just guessed. I got part of it right. But I came to the wrong place on the wrong day to read for the wrong show.

**LINDA:** Which part did you get right?

**KIMMI:** Well, the message WAS for me.

**ELIZABETH:** I'm SO telling this story at my next dinner party.

**KIMMI:** Then my stupid car died on the way over, and I had to walk the last two miles and broke the heel of my shoe. I finally get here and I'm dirty and crying and of course they have no idea who I am, so I guess to make me feel better they said I could go ahead and read.

**CAROLE:** When did you figure out they're only casting a forty year old?

**KIMMI:** When I read the sides and she's saying words from other centuries like "groovy" and "jive" and "righteous." (*The others are embarrassed.*)

**MO:** Well, someday when you're a big star you can tell that story on the David Letterman Junior Show.

**KIMMI:** Yeah. But for now I just have to wait around.

**CAROLE:** For a ride home.

**KIMMI:** No, to go back in.

**MO:** Back in...back in where?

**KIMMI:** Inside. For the callback. The producers liked me so much they're rewriting the part for somebody younger. (*They all freeze.*) I told them, see, if she's younger, she can be a District Attorney and be sexy at the same time.

**CASTING ASSISTANT:** (O.S.) Kimmi?

**KIMMI:** (*Looking O.S.*) Oh, here I am! (*To the others.*) Nice meeting you all, have a great day!

*KIMMI exits. In unison, they toss their sides into the air in defeat. BLACKOUT.*

## **ACT ONE, SCENE 4A**

*Spotlight up on DONNA. PowerPoint presentation.*

**DONNA:** In Hollywood, only one thing is real: fantasy. They don't buy shows about putting your parents in assisted living or needing a colonoscopy or losing your car keys. That's too MUCH reality television. Hollywood is not about real life, it's about helping people FORGET their real life. Fictional characters are good-looking and charming and funny. They don't have to go to the DMV, they don't get lonely, and they don't need deodorant. And you start thinking you want to know them or sleep with them or BE them. Because the fake THEM is better than the real YOU. And that's Hollywood. And if you think about it, that's really fucking sick!

*BLACKOUT.*

ACT ONE, SCENE 4B

*Lights up in LINDA'S LIVING ROOM where LINDA, MO, CAROLE, and ELIZABETH sit. WALTER stands.*

**LINDA:** Walter? The floor is yours.

**WALTER:** Thank you. I called Linda and asked if we could all meet this morning. There is something I would like to discuss with you. I want to make a film.

**ELIZABETH:** Do you have a distributor?

**WALTER:** No.

**ELIZABETH:** A script?

**WALTER:** No.

**ELIZABETH:** What's it about?

**WALTER:** You.

**ELIZABETH:** YES! I'm in. *(The others stare at ELIZABETH.)*

**MO:** You know, Elizabeth, it's actually okay to have both style AND substance.

**WALTER:** The film would be about all of you. A documentary about "The United State of Actresses." *(He expects thanks. He expects wrong.)* Um... Insert enthusiasm here?

**LINDA:** A documentary. About this?

**MO:** You want to make a film about how we're too old to get work?

**CAROLE:** I say we stomp him. Stomp him good. *(They all look at her.)* It's the Wellbutrin talking.

**ELIZABETH:** Fine then. It can just be about me. "The United State of Elizabeth." Loving it!

**WALTER:** Now, hold on. I know on the surface it's not much. But if you really think about it...okay, it's not much then, either.

**LINDA:** Still...

**WALTER:** Yes. "Still..." Run with that.

**LINDA:** It could get our faces out there.

**CAROLE:** That's more than my agent's doing.

**LINDA:** It could get us work.

**ELIZABETH:** That's more than my manager's doing.

**LINDA:** And it could get us hot again.

**MO:** That's more than my husband's doing. Did I say that out loud?

**WALTER:** I can get a camera. A DP friend has one and owes me a favor. Last week we went out for a few drinks and ended up in this strip club, and things got a little crazy, heh heh heh, and he's married, and – (*Off their stares; realizes.*) – Anyway, I can get a camera.

**LINDA:** Walter, thank you for the offer. We need to discuss it, weigh the pros and cons, and take a vote. You understand.

**WALTER:** Absolutely. Just get back to me, you have my numbers –

**LINDA:** All in favor?

**LINDA/MO/CAROLE/ELIZABETH:** Aye! (*WALTER reacts.*)

**WALTER:** O-kay. Well, in that case, here's your rehearsal schedule. (*He distributes typed sheets of paper. ELIZABETH peruses.*)

**ELIZABETH:** Blah blah blah, blah blah blah, blah blah – wait a minute. Acceptance speeches? We have to write acceptance speeches?

**WALTER:** Like the one Linda never got to give.

**LINDA:** Thank you.

**WALTER:** It's my high concept. I thought, everybody in this town has worked out an acceptance speech whether they cop to it or not. Hearing them would be...poignant.

**LINDA:** Poignant? Or pathetic?

**MO:** Oh, come on, it sounds like fun.

**CAROLE:** Fun?

**MO:** It's something people have when they're enjoying themselves. Not you, but other people.

**WALTER:** I also want to shoot some B-roll stuff out in the world. Who does what?

**ELIZABETH:** I teach beginner's acting.

**WALTER:** Great. Cute kids running around in wardrobe. Who else?

**ELIZABETH:** It's my way of giving something back.

**WALTER:** Great. Who else?

**ELIZABETH:** Performing is wonderful, but if I can pass down my love of the craft to –

**WALTER:** Stop talking. Who else?

**MO:** I'm walking a 10K for charity.

**WALTER:** Women wearing shorts. Perfecto.

**MO:** Get there early because after one-point-five K I puke.

**WALTER:** So noted. Next.

**CAROLE:** I am the world's best solitaire player! If there was an Olympic team for solitaire, I'd be on it. Or at least an alternate. Although I do still cheat sometimes. I'm a bad person, huh.

**ELIZABETH:** "Memo to Carole, From Elizabeth, Re: Your Dosage?"  
(She gives her a "thumbs up" and indicates she should be raising it.)

**WALTER:** Linda? What have you got happening?

**LINDA:** Oh, nothing really. I don't need any B-roll, moving on...

**MO:** Linda! Did you forget about the Civic Center...? (MO starts to dig around in a nearby newspaper.)

**WALTER:** Right! I saw the ad. The baseball card show! The Phunny Phamily Reunion, at the Civic Center signing autographs.

**MO:** Here it is! (Reads.) "Reunited for the first time in phourteen years" – they spelled "phourteen" with a "PH." (MO snickers.)

**LINDA:** I'm not part of it. I turned them down. I don't want to be Felicia Phunny...although I know, in some ways, I am. But I'm afraid that's all I'll ever be. It's "G.I.S."

**CAROLE:** "G.I.S.?"

**LINDA:** Gilligan's Island Syndrome. The conundrum of Ginger vs. Mary Ann.

**MO:** I don't remember a conundrum. I remember bras made out of coconut shells.

**LINDA:** When the original series ended, Tina Louise rejected Ginger, while meanwhile Dawn Wells BECAME Mary Ann. Tina wouldn't do any of the subsequent TV movies, not even the one with the Harlem Globetrotters. Dawn meanwhile did all of them.

**WALTER:** And the conundrum part was...?

**LINDA:** Who made the right choice? Dawn never worked again except as Mary Ann. Tina never worked again, period. I look at them both and want to go back to bed and wolf down cookie dough until I explode all over the walls. (A pall. Then.)

**ELIZABETH:** All right, enough. It's true. We have all been typecast in one way or another. Carole as the zombied-out one...

**CAROLE:** Sprry, huh?

**ELIZABETH:** Mo as the large one...

**MO:** I am not large. I'm fat. (Sexy.) Blubber, baby.

**ELIZABETH:** And yours truly as the fabulously-talented-yet-ever-so slightly-high-strung one...I know, I don't get it either. But I am THIS close!

**WALTER:** Is there a point to this?

**ELIZABETH:** No. *(Then:)* Wait, yes! The point is, Linda, you don't have to take that, and neither do we. We are going to reinvent ourselves and hit it big and become outrageously happy.

**LINDA:** We are?

**ELIZABETH:** Well, "we" in this case meaning "me."

*LINDA reacts. BLACKOUT.*

### ACT ONE, SCENE 5A

*Spotlight up on DONNA. PowerPoint presentation.*

**DONNA:** In the beginning, God created Heaven and...the script. That's where it all starts – with the writer. On the screen is where things end. With the actor. In between lies the director. With "lies" being the operative word. The director is the double agent whose job it is to make both the writer and the actor believe they are right. Directors are vital because they can accept what writers and actors cannot: that a writer, without an actor, is a typist. And an actor, without a writer, is a waiter.

*BLACKOUT.*

### ACT ONE, SCENE 5B

*Spotlight up on CAROLE, in The Interview Chair. WALTER sits opposite.*

**CAROLE:** It all started the first time I saw "Gone With The Wind." I thought, THAT'S who I want to be.

**WALTER:** Vivien Leigh.

**CAROLE:** No, Clark Gable.

**WALTER:** Clark Gable.

**CAROLE:** The men were the stars. They were fighting duels and changing the world. The women just sat around trying not to mess up their hair.

**WALTER:** And what brought you to the United State of Actresses?

**CAROLE:** My therapist. Dr. Mitch. I'm not sure he's all that good, but it's hard to find somebody who makes house calls.

**DR. MITCH:** (V.O.) Carole. This group would be good for you. Actually, just going outside to get your mail would be good for you.

**CAROLE:** For years, he tried to get me out of my head. And out of my house.

**DR. MITCH:** (V.O.) Carole. This is your chance to face your core dichotomy: you're an actress who hates actresses! Remember that car with the "I'd Rather Be Acting" bumper sticker? Which, according to the police report, you rammed repeatedly just on principle?

**CAROLE:** You know what I think are the most underrated things ever? Chairs. I mean, look at this. Who thought this up? It's brilliant. A seat. And legs. Combined. If it weren't for chairs, we'd all have to eat standing up. Or lying down. There'd be a lot of spilling. And/or grass stains. The savings on dry cleaning alone multiplied by how many people on Earth? I can't even get my head around that. What was the question?

**WALTER:** I have no idea. How you feel about being an actress?

**CAROLE:** I love it. And I hate it. In this business. the only way to succeed is to care. But the only way to survive is not to.

*BLACKOUT.*

## ACT ONE, SCENE 5C

*Spotlight up on MO in the other Interview Chair.*

**MO:** ...I have been the funny neighbor forty-six times on primetime TV. A modern-day record, I'm told.

**WALTER:** You're a mom...three sons...

**MO:** Yes. Born less than three years apart. Sometimes I think of them as "the triplets." Except instead of one labor, I got three, so other times I think of them as "the little bastards."

**WALTER:** Not easy to work in this town and be a full-time mom.

**MO:** You know, funny about that. After my first was born, before I could lose the baby weight, I started to work more! Then after number two, I didn't try to lose it, and by number three, I had the feedbag strapped on twenty-four/seven. The bigger my clothes, the bigger my paychecks! It was like I was being paid by the pound! Two words for that: "Supersize it!"

**DOCTOR:** (V.O.) Okay, let's talk about the test results.

**MO:** I've just gone with it, and everything is working out just fine.

**DOCTOR:** (V.O.) They're just as I expected. And totally treatable.

**MO:** I have my niche. And I've never been happier.

**DOCTOR:** (V.O.) But let's keep in mind, diabetes is something to be taken seriously.

**MO:** And I look forward to growing as an actor. In a manner of speaking!

**DOCTOR:** (V.O.) Most of it's about diet and exercise.

**MO:** My manager thinks I'm ready to cross over from TV to features.

**DOCTOR:** (V.O.) We need to get your weight down. Way down.

**MO:** No!

**WALTER:** No?

**MO:** Sorry. I just meant I'm ready. I've worked so hard to get here. I can't let it get away from me now.

*BLACKOUT.*

## **ACT ONE, SCENE 5D**

*SPOTLIGHT UP on ELIZABETH in the other Interview Chair.*

**WALTER:** How long have you been an actress?

**ELIZABETH:** My mother says it was the day I turned four. My father brought out my cake, they all sang Happy Birthday, I blew out the candles, and everyone clapped. And I'm told I loved the moment so much that I cried and held my breath until my mother lit the candles again, so I could blow them out again, so they would all applaud again.

**WALTER:** How sweet.

**ELIZABETH:** Sweet? Are you demented? It was a death sentence. Needing applause is a virus. There is no treatment. There is no cure. There is no recovery.

**WALTER:** Wow...how...

**ELIZABETH:** Dramatic?

**WALTER:** I was going to say depressing, but dramatic works.

**ELIZABETH:** Thank you so much. I'm very versatile. I sing, too.

**WALTER:** That's fine. Talk about your greatest passion.

**ELIZABETH:** Actually, I'm not seeing anybody right now.

**WALTER:** I meant your teaching.

**ELIZABETH:** Oh. Oh! See, I have all this love inside me. I can feel it. I used to think I was just retaining water, but no, I can feel it pulsing here, there, everywhere. You have to believe me when I say...I am just so full of it.

**WALTER:** I do believe that, yes. So...you TEACH.

**ELIZABETH:** Oh. Right. The little darlings, their souls are so pure, they're so eager to learn. I say to them, "Hello, class!" And they jump to attention, their eyes sparkling.

**KID:** (V.O.) Acting's stupid! We wanna watch TV!

**ELIZABETH:** They're like new clay, fresh from the pack, ready to be molded. I say, "Come here now, it's time to begin!" And they run right over.

**KID:** (V.O. *Taunting her.*) You can't catch us! You can't catch us!

**ELIZABETH:** They love me and can't wait to see me.

**KID:** (V.O.) We hate you! Go away!

**ELIZABETH:** There are two things I want in life: a TV series and a baby. And if God ever decided to give an insignificant wretched soul like me the greatest blessing of them all, well, I guess the baby would just have to wait.

*BLACKOUT.*

## ACT ONE, SCENE 5E

*Spotlight up on LINDA in the other Interview Chair.*

**WALTER:** What's the number one thing people don't understand about acting?

**LINDA:** They see it as a lot of ups and downs. But that's misleading, because there aren't many "ups." I mean, some things may look like "ups," like when you get an audition. But when you don't get the part, it's a "down." So the "up" wasn't really an "up" at all, it was just a "down" waiting to happen. That's why you need something real to hang onto. That's my husband, Ben. He doesn't wear Armani, he wears a tool belt. When he "does lunch" there's a lunch box involved. He doesn't love the business, but he loves me.

**BEN:** (V.O.) I love you, Linda.

**LINDA:** He's amazing. Completely practical, but he knows I have a dream.

**BEN:** (V.O.) I know you have a dream.

**LINDA:** We've been married nearly fifteen years.

**BEN:** (V.O.) But we also have a deal.

**LINDA:** He keeps me thinking "Big Picture."

**BEN:** (V.O.) Don't forget our deal, Linda.

**LINDA:** He keeps me thinking "Big Picture."

**BEN:** (V.O.) Don't forget our deal.

**LINDA:** Whether I want to or not. "I act, therefore I am."

*BLACKOUT.*

## ACT ONE, SCENE 6

*Lights up in LINDA's living room. ELIZABETH enters as LINDA crosses in.*

**ELIZABETH:** I want to kill myself.

**LINDA:** Why?

**ELIZABETH:** I'm a forty year-old actress in Hollywood. Do I need another reason?

*CAROLE enters.*

**CAROLE:** Hello! Cute shoes!

**LINDA/ELIZABETH:** Thank you!

**ELIZABETH:** Yours are cuter.

**LINDA:** Yours are cuter.

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**ELIZABETH:** Okay, you win! Mine are pretty cute.

**LINDA:** Walter's coming over. He has a rough cut of the film and says we all come off really well, even Elizabeth.

**ELIZABETH:** Did he really say that?

**LINDA:** No, of course not!

*LINDA turns to CAROLE and nods and mouths "Yes, he did." LINDA crosses away as CAROLE approaches ELIZABETH.*

**CAROLE:** Could I ask you a personal question?

**ELIZABETH:** Is this about Sugar Daddies dot com?

**CAROLE:** Um, no...what's that?

**ELIZABETH:** Oh. Heh. Nothing. You had a question?

**CAROLE:** What is it between you and Mo? I mean, underneath all that surface hatred seems to be a... Much deeper hatred.

**ELIZABETH:** Really? Oh, no. I love Mo! Our love is just...turned a little inside out, that's all.

**CAROLE:** What does that mean?

**ELIZABETH:** It means I hate her.

**CAROLE:** Why?

**ELIZABETH:** Because...I get my jobs by taking acting classes, spinning classes, yoga classes, networking in both appropriate and semi-appropriate ways, and generally busting my ass and my agent's chops on pretty much a daily basis, including weekends and holidays. Do you know how Mo gets her jobs? By joining the Fondue of the Month Club!

*MO enters near LINDA.*

**MO:** Hello hello!

**LINDA:** Elizabeth wants to kill herself.

**MO:** Oh. Well...I think we have to respect that.

**ELIZABETH:** Thank you.

**MO:** I have a problem.

**ELIZABETH:** Singular?

**MO:** Counting you, multiple. But for the purposes of this conversation, singular. I'm writing my acceptance speech, and I'm wondering about protocol.

**LINDA:** Protocol?

**MO:** Is it appropriate to thank dead people? I mean, it's not like they can hear me. *(To CAROLE.)* Are you thanking dead people?

**CAROLE:** I'm not thanking anyone. No one's ever done anything for me except hold me back, laugh at me, and ignore me. *(MO ignores her, moves to LINDA.)*

**MO:** Are you thanking dead people?

**LINDA:** I'm not doing the speech.

**ELIZABETH:** That's it, stick to your guns, Linda. You keep your principles, I'll take the screen time. Win!

**WALTER:** Greetings, stars! *(WALTER ENTERS, holding a DVD. They ad lib excited greetings and crowd him.)* Please step away from the director! Thank you! *(They back off.)* You all look great. Now, it hasn't been color-corrected, and I can soften up the look on the DiVinci. The sound's thin, but I'll bass up the voices when I put the dialogue in Protools.

**CAROLE:** What did he say?

**ELIZABETH:** He said I look great!

**MO:** This is so exciting!

**LINDA:** I have champagne. Ben and I were saving it for a special occasion, but we haven't had it yet, so...

**WALTER:** Why don't you hear everything first and we can celebrate after that.

**ELIZABETH:** Uh-oh.

**MO:** Uh-oh what?

**ELIZABETH:** I don't know. But my "uh-oh" detector went off.

**CAROLE:** What do you mean, "hear everything," Walter?

**WALTER:** I have good news. I took the cut around a little, and believe it or not...I found a distributor!

*They cheer and hug each other. CAROLE wants nothing to do with the "hug" part.*

**WALTER:** They love it. They love everything about it. They don't want to change a thing.

**CAROLE:** Uh-oh. There goes mine.

**MO:** What's the "but," Walter?

**WALTER:** There's no "but." (*They all look relieved. A beat...another beat...one more beat...*) AND...

**ELIZABETH:** "And"? There's an "and"?

**LINDA:** Uh-oh. Now I'm doing it.

**WALTER:** And...they think what's already perfect could be even more perfect. If we just changed it.

**MO:** Uh-oh. Well now, that's everybody.

**WALTER:** Everybody stop "uh-oh"-ing. This is not an "uh-oh" situation. These people can get our film into Sundance if we give them what they need from a marketing standpoint.

**ELIZABETH:** Which is what?

**WALTER:** I'm so glad you asked. This is kind of a funny story, actually. See, the thing about making a film about actresses who can't open a film, is that there are no actresses actually in the film who can actually open it. One of those catch-22 kinda thingies.

**LINDA:** They want our film to have a star? Are you crazy, Walter?

**ELIZABETH:** That's not what he's saying.

**WALTER:** That is what I'm saying.

**ELIZABETH:** Are you crazy, Walter?

**WALTER:** I told them it's nuts. I said we've got actresses who have worked forever here. Commercials for paper towels, cat litter, AMC Pacer, for God's sake. I even told them we had Felicia Phunney.

**LINDA:** Good Lord.

**WALTER:** But they have investors to answer to, so they have a problem.

**MO:** Which is now OUR problem.

**LINDA:** So, in order to sell this supposedly true story about a group of no-names, we need to bring in someone with a name who's not really IN the group at all.

**WALTER:** I knew you'd understand.

**CAROLE:** This sucks. (*Then, insecure.*) This DOES suck, right?

**ELIZABETH:** Yes.

**CAROLE:** Knew it.

**WALTER:** Now, hold on. Without a distributor, we're just making a home movie that'll never see the light of day. If that's what you want, I'll tell them thanks but no thanks and you can go back to your acting classes and your auditions and your day jobs. It's your call.

*A moment as they consider...*

**LINDA:** This really is our best chance. Maybe our last chance.

**WALTER:** All opposed? (*Silence.*) Good choice. Yes, this is a compromise. But it's for your own good. And at the end of the day, this is your organization and your story and your film. I know that. And so does she.

**LINDA:** She?

**CAROLE:** She who?

**WALTER:** Donna Hightower.

*CAROLE screams.*

**MO:** Donna Hightower?

*CAROLE screams again.*

**WALTER:** What? Donna has a star on Hollywood Boulevard, her own line of polyester Wal-Mart clothes, and she'll do it for free. Making her a perfect fit.

**CAROLE:** Oh no. I worked with Donna Hightower. Years ago. Pre-pills. It was supposed to be my breakout role. A career maker. But she was so awful on-screen she single-handedly invented the concept of "straight-to-video." And she was so terrible off-screen that I quit halfway through the production. Everybody on set called her "Prima Donna." She's a ham. She's a bitch.

**WALTER:** She's my wife.

*CAROLE is frozen a beat. Then:*

**CAROLE:** See? THIS is why I don't leave the house!

*DONNA enters.*

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**DONNA:** Are you out of your MIND, Walter? Leaving me out in the car with the window rolled down like some sort of international superstar Chihuahua? *(She demonstrates a Chihuahua nodding its head furiously while panting.)*

**WALTER:** Oh. Hi. Honey.

**DONNA:** *(To the group.)* Hello. I am...THE Donna Hightower! *(She curtsies grandly. CAROLE screams. The others scream on the inside.)*

**WALTER:** Donna, this is the United State of Actresses.

**DONNA:** I believe this is where I'm supposed to say how happy I am to be here.

**LINDA:** Yes. Was that it?

**WALTER:** If I could have a moment.

*WALTER and DONNA huddle in private conversation. WALTER points out the women to DONNA, who nods. Satisfied, DONNA starts towards the women, but WALTER grabs her arm and brings her back. He has more to tell her. This time, annoyed, she pulls away and rejoins them.*

**WALTER:** Ah, ah, ah... honey? You look great today, by the way.

**DONNA:** Walter, you do know that one can only be condescending to someone they're superior to, right?

**WALTER:** I'm not being condescending. I'm being patronizing. You like that.

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