

* “/” denotes the beginning of overlapping text.

SCENE 1

(Lights come up on a stage set up very much like that of a dating show. There is a podium SR, behind which, the host stands. To the left of him, CS, sits the contestant, a student, on a stool. To the left of the student sits a row of faculty members of a University Theatre Department.)

HOST. Welcome to the University Theatre Department Advisor Selection Show! I’m your host, the Department Head! I am a great guy, but – don’t get me wrong – I am definitely male and white. Meet our contestant: an aspiring high-school senior from who-the-fuck-knows-where! Yayyy! Let’s all give them a big round of applause. *(Reacting to the sparse clapping in which I imagine the spectators participate.)* Oh, come on, I think we can do better than that. A real round of applause! Yesssss. They’ve come so far, and we want to congratulate them on that. Going to college is no easy feat (even when your parents are paying for it all)! And let’s be real, what theatre student *isn’t* going to school on their parent’s dime? Right? Right. *(To random spectator.)* You know what I’m talking about. Yeah, you do. Anyways, let’s get this party started! *(To student.)* James? Jemima? Jimothy?

STUDENT. Actually it’s—

HOST. I’m just KIDDING! We don’t care what your name is! Why would we? You’re probably going to wind up as a barista or a secretary at a fashion company anyway. But no. Do tell us about yourself!

STUDENT. Well, I want to do this because I love it. I love the theatre. I love art. And I want to inspire people with art. That’s—that’s really all I want to do with my life.

HOST. Oh, you poor sweet thing, that is so adorable... So adorable. Anyways, are you ready for one of the most important decisions in your College career? A decision that will, no doubt, greatly influence the next four years of your life and may well be the thing that results in your success or failure within this department. Are you ready to pick your mentor, your friend, your go-to person for advice of all kinds, your first line of defense against the bureaucracy of the University, your confidant, your advocate, your greatest source of information when it comes to questions about the industry, maybe your first professional connection? Are. You.

Ready.....To pick your ACADEMIC ADVISOR?!?!

STUDENT. I guess—

HOST. Great! Let’s get started! Your first contestant has been published in not one, but TWO academic journals, got their master’s—and PhD.—at the University of Michigan, and is passionate about home-brewing pilsners! Contestant number one! Why should Jim-Jemima-fuck-if-I-know-their-name choose you?

CONTESTANT #1. Well—and thank you for asking that question—I have been published in not one, but TWO academic journals, first of all – AND—and you left this out—but I am also the *editor* of a new academic journal that I started this past year! So, you could say I’m pretty much a respected authority when it comes to the theatre.

STUDENT. Oh, that’s pretty cool! So...Why did you get into teaching?

CONTESTANT #1. Mmmm. Hmmm...That’s a really great question—thank you for asking that question. Hmm. I want to address this in the most respectful manner I can... Ermmm...Well, I got into teaching because I hate the theatre.

STUDENT. Wha—

CONTESTANT #1. I really wanted to go into academia because, you know, I really became very interested in exposing how the theatre was—is—you know, I think the theatre is a dying art-form, so that's why I got into teaching: because you have to teach if you want to go into academia. I mean, I USED to do the whole “performing thing”, but honestly, I think it's immature and meaningless and doesn't account for the absolute absurdity of our existence. You know, I believe, staunchly, that the only meaningful art is the art that realizes—and tries to convey—that everything is pointless.

STUDENT. Umm.....

HOST. Thank you very much contestant number one! Next up, contestant number two! Why should anyone ever want to speak to you?

CONTESTANT #2. Well, I *have* been in several Broadway shows so that's kind of helpful, I guess.

STUDENT. What?! That's so incredible! Wait... I think I know you... Were you—you weren't in the musical with the people in the place, were you?

CONTESTANT #2. I was, yes.

STUDENT. So, you got to work with Bernadette Peters?!

CONTESTANT #2. Oh. Yeah.

STUDENT. Wait—wait! You were the principal understudy, right? You got to understudy for Bernadette Peters???

CONTESTANT #2. Yes. I did. But Bernadette is, well, interesting.

STUDENT. What? What do you mean?

CONTESTANT #2. Well, you know, the way she works is just kind of...fucking shit.

STUDENT. But... her work on the show with the people in the place was so phenomenal! She really captured the humanity of that isolated grief-stricken artist.

CONTESTANT #2. Ehhh, no. She was a pain to work with. Really really selfish performer. Honestly, I *hate* Bernadette Peters. I mean *despise* her. Can't stand her. I think she's shit. She takes everything and makes it all about her!

STUDENT. But wasn't she playing a reclusive artist?

CONTESTANT #2. Should I fuckin' care? She was the worst.

STUDENT. But she was one of the people who inspired me to do this.

CONTESTANT #2. Well, you know, that's on you.

STUDENT. But I—

HOST. Okayyyy, next up! Contestant number three! Please introduce yourself to Jimmy-fuck-if-I-know.

CONTESTANT #3. Hello. I am contestant number three. I have a PhD in Drama and I love Brecht.

STUDENT. What—what's Brecht?

CONTESTANT #3. Brecht is love. Brecht is life. Brecht is smart, and devoted to theory, and rationalization, and Brecht is complicated, and sexy, and burlesque on occasion, right? Brecht is real, but sometimes a musical. He wants the spectator to think but also wants to entertain. He's influenced by all of these factors that were unique to the 20th century, and he's so influential in the 21st. He is concerned with community but revels in the individual, right? He breaks down all these preconceived notions about the ethics of character and invites us to be ourselves. His theatre is epic, right... Right?

STUDENT. Right. But...what is Brecht?

HOST. Right! Moving on. Contestant number four, what's your deal? What butters your biscuit? What truffles your triscuit?

CONTESTANT #4. Well, I am very concerned with caring for my students and also about curating their professionalism. You know, I am so absolutely here for anyone that needs to talk about anything. My door is always open, and my office is a safe space to address any issue. You know, I really want you to thrive, so I am here for you and I'm more than willing to help you out if you're ever going through anything. But I also care deeply about maintaining a professional learning environment. Like, the best way to prepare you for the industry is to prepare you for what it's really like: unforgiving. So, if you ever take a class with me, try not to miss it alright?

STUDENT. Um—about that, I think I do have you this semester for *Acting for the Mover*, and I just want to let you know ahead of time that I will be gone for a week in September due to an unforeseen death in the family.

CONTESTANT #4. Hmm. Well, that's going to be tricky. What days did you say?

STUDENT. The—erm—first week of September.

CONTESTANT #4. Well, that's no good at all. I am going to need you there that week...

That's our week connecting the movement patterns of cows with Shakespeare's characters. Your family can't do the funeral another week?

STUDENT. ...Excuse me? No...

CONTESTANT #4. Well, that's a shame. I'll have to mark you absent from those days.

STUDENT. Absent? What? I can't get an excused absence for a funeral? Seriously?

CONTESTANT #4. I really need you there. So, no.

STUDENT. What the fuck, dude?

HOST. Anywayyyyyy, let's come back to the task at hand here. You know, assigning an advisor and what not, hey?

STUDENT. ...Fine.

HOST. Great! Are you ready to meet our next contestant?

STUDENT. Sure, I guess.

HOST. Wonderful. Contestant number five! What makes you so special?

CONTESTANT #5. Me? Nothing, really.

HOST. Yes, yes, yes, we all know that but that's not what I mean. I mean, why are you here?

CONTESTANT #5. On this show?

HOST. On this show. Why do you teach *the theatre*?

CONTESTANT #5. I suppose, because I love it. I absolutely love it. You've got to love it. Otherwise, it'll break you completely. *(To the student.)* And it's not been an easy thing getting here but my goal is to do my best to help you and inspire you to love the theatre as much as you can because—

HOST. *(Interrupting.)* O-buh-kay-bie, let's move on to someone a bit more academically engaging, shall we?

STUDENT. Um—but I—o-okay.

HOST. Contestant number six! You're quite the talented person, aren't you? Got quite the extensive resume, isn't that right? What can you offer to the professional educational development of this student whose name I have forgotten?

CONTESTANT #6. Well, I'm really interested in pedagogy. Pedagogy is super important to me right now.

STUDENT. O-okay. But how exactly is it important to you?

HOST. SHHH. Let them speak!

CONTESTANT #6. Ahh, you know... the way in which we, as teachers... teach needs to be something, I think, we're conscious of. While we're teaching.

STUDENT. Right. I'm confused.

HOST. Be quiet! You are interrupting! And honestly, you should be taking down notes right now. You might learn something.

CONTESTANT #6. And being. I think we should be... what we want to be. I think we should think about who we are and then be who we want to be. Yeah... I think that's...that's how we change the world.

HOST. Beautiful words, contestant number six! Beautiful words! I couldn't have said it better myself!

STUDENT. Are they?

HOST. You, child, should be *ashamed* of yourself for asking such a stupid question... Of course they are! But we digress. Contestant number seven! What do you have to bring to the table?

CONTESTANT #7. Well, I'll tell you plainly that you're shit. These younger professors, they're not so honest. But they should be. But also, I'll challenge you and help you grow.

STUDENT. Okay... how will you do that?

CONTESTANT #7. Well, I'll give you an example of something I did with my class last year that turned out to be very effective. We, as actors need to be comfortable in our own bodies. So, to *help* my young actors become comfortable with themselves and their fellow students, all the scenes I picked out for class involved nudity.

STUDENT. You required your students to perform completely naked for you? During class? For credit?

CONTESTANT #7. No better way to get comfortable with yourself than to jump in the deep end.

STUDENT. Isn't that a bit... exploitative?

CONTESTANT #7. If you can't stand the heat, get out of the kitchen.

STUDENT. (*To host.*) I think I want to pick contestant number five.

HOST. Oh, you don't get to pick.

STUDENT. What?

HOST. Oh, right, yes, sorry. But you are – let's be honest – a child. So, because we have your best interests at heart, we are going to select your academic advisor.

STUDENT. I-I don't get a say in it at all?

HOST. Nope. Never have.

STUDENT. Then... what the FUCK was all this for?! What purpose-

HOST. (*Silencing the student.*) Aht, aht, ah! The adults are talking now. I think we'll pair you with.....

STUDENT. I want to be with /contestant number five—

HOST (*Overlapping.*) Contestant number seven! CONGRATULATIONS!!! You are officially the advisee of an esteemed faculty member at this University!!!

STUDENT. This is bullshit.

HOST. Noooo. It's college. (*The Host taps their own nose knowingly. Blackout.*)

End Scene