

MARIA. "Penn State Berks Campus to welcome Summerstage next summer. Barry Schultz—"

CLIVE. NO!!!

IRENE. The fertilizer company heir—I can't make that up!

MARIA. "Has announced, for a year from now, a season of theater to be performed in the comfort of Wyomissing. Mr. Schultz boasts, 'So often a trip to the theater involves going into the city—well no more!'"

CLIVE. (*Gasps.*) Wha?

IRENE. This is nothing—wait.

MARIA. "What this county craves is a professional theater done professionally!"

IRENE. That little crap salesman was Babcock in *Mame* at Operetta, I had the opportunity to shove him off the stage and into the orchestra pit back then but I SQUANDERED my chance, because I thought—he's inheriting a manure company—isn't his life punishment enough?

CLIVE. It's his father's money—

IRENE. Of course!

CLIVE. They just made a donation to Penn State.

MARIA. Do I continue reading or just act upset like everybody else?

IRENE. Sorry. Carry on Maria—

MARIA. "Performances begin this June at the Berks Summerstage. Our finest plays with the finest visiting actors from New York City, many of them stars on soap operas such as *The Secret Storm* and *Dark Shadows*."

CLIVE. I can only imagine the quality of— (*Damien walks in, wearing a costume of leaves that barely cover his crotch.*)

MARIA. Opening season will be *Streetcar Named Desire*, *Death of a Salesman*, *Long Day's Journey into Night*, and *You Can't Take It with You*.

DAMIEN. Wow, *Streetcar*, *Salesman*, *Long Day's*, and—

DAMIEN and MARIA. *You Can't Take It with You*.

MARIA. You see!!!

IRENE. No, no—this—this manureist is tormenting us, he's getting his digs in now. (*Grabbing the paper, throws the paper down.*) Well, zei gezunt, Berks Summerstage. (*Car enters.*)

MARIA. But that season—why do we continue to do these obscure works when—

IRENE. You work UP to those plays and you do not take them so lightly. What do you do next season? *Peer Gynt* and *Show Boat*?

Crawl, then walk, crap-seller. Now, WE are ready for those plays but you are not, Mr. Dark Storm Secret Shadows! This whole thing is repulsive to me, this side of the business.

CAR. Well, what can we do?

IRENE. What can we do? (*Holding Car's face in her hands.*) Well we can put on our show, that's what we can do and we can announce OUR season. We can go on.

MARIA. Please say you're doing *Luv* by Murray Schisgal for me, YOU PROMISED.

IRENE. Of course, of course—It's in the season.

DAMIEN. I've yet to put on this harness not that it matters but it IS my life that is involved here.

IRENE. We'll do it, we'll do it—

MARIA. Irene, did you bring my stole back?

IRENE. Yes...that—Damien, could you— (*BLAM!!! A huge explosion. Dust flies from the hole in the dressing room.*)

CAR. Jesus, what the hell was that?

CLIVE. I think Sid just took off her bra.

MARIA. Your humor shows your hatred of women and— (*BLAM—another explosion, larger than the last. Dust from the dressing room hole, things are falling in the theater.*)

CLIVE. Run!!

DAMIEN. What the hell is this?

SID. (*Running on.*) A wrecking ball, a motherfucking wrecking ball, like a big one like who knew they made them like out of a goddamn Tom and Jerry cartoon.

IRENE. Call Jo Jo.

MARIA. My costumes are in there, they'll be ruined.

CAR. Dialing!

IRENE. (*An odd sort of calm.*) Are they really thinking this will stop me?

SID. Irene, this is serious—get that look off your face.

CAR. Ringing.

IRENE. My back is to the wall, that's my favorite position right there.

SID. Irene, no. This round is over, we run and call it a day.

IRENE. They sent Jews to Reading to starve, to fail. Nobody else could make money off the stubborn Dutchmen. But what they didn't count on: Yiddish is very close to Pennsylvania Dutch—we could sell things the Englishers could not. We could talk it so.

MARIA. What is she even saying?

IRENE. *(To herself.)* I can hear Ellen Stewart's little bell. Ting-a-ling-aling-aling! I hear Joe calling, "Magic time." Al is banging on the upright at Judson.

SID. Irene, what are you saying, dear?

CAR. It's ringing.

IRENE. *(Suddenly brightly to Sid.)* I'm saying you can have the worst luck but the best career and I should know 'cause I got both in spades.

CAR. Hold for Irene Sampson Keller, please. *(Irene walks with great grandeur to the phone.)*

IRENE. *(Under her breath.)* Jo Jo is being a prick, why is Jo Jo being a prick, let's see why Jo Jo is being a prick. *(She takes a breath to speak. A BLAM from the wrecking ball, more dust. All fall to the ground. The explosion causes Irene to buckle a bit. She stops, looks in the direction of the wrecking ball. Into phone, brightly.)* Jo Jo?! Why are you being a prick? *(He must be pleading ignorance on the other end.)* You know very well that there are wrecking balls swinging away right now, you insult my intelligence, but mostly you just look foolish. Foolish. Like the time I saw you fucking your sister-in-law in the Crystal Restaurant coatroom. Oops that just slipped out, I don't know when it will slip out again. Or what else will slip out of this suddenly very open mouth. *(BLAM, another explosion. Dust and everyone holds on for dear life. To the room:)* JO JO'S MOTHER ISN'T REALLY ITALIAN, SHE'S MEXICAN!! How many more hits you got? 'Cause I have not even scratched the surface here. Oh you're calling them off— *(BLAM, another explosion.)* You want me to bring up the midnight runs to NY?? Mr. Right-to-Life? What? Quiet now? One more is all I need. Nothing. Now. Now, Jo Jo. Why are you being such a prick. Because what? *(She listens for a bit.)* You saw one of our little queers walking in and out of a building we didn't rent?

CAR. I'm not queer. I was getting dry ice.

IRENE. I'll have you know that boy is completely undecided at this point. This demolition is off—you hear me? We are putting on our season—No. NO. You can tear down this block but not this building. No. No. Okay. One month. Well thanks for the warning Jo Jo, you rat bastard! *(Slams the phone down.)* I think that went well.

SID. Irene, no lies, no sugarcoat—what's going on?

IRENE. This whole block is coming down, they want us out by the end of next month.

MARIA. Where will we go?
IRENE. We'll think of something.
MARIA. But what?
CLIVE. Has it stopped? Has the bombing stopped? I feel like it's London and the Blitz and I'm a little cockney orphan.
SID. Calm down, Mary.
IRENE. I'm thinking of something. We have to be bigger and better.
SID. We need a space—we'll get through August but—
IRENE. Oh I know the space.
SID. I see that look in your eye. That's the look that leads to tears.
IRENE. I got the space.
SID. Irene, think.
IRENE. Ting-a-ling-aling-aling! Magic time.
CAR. What are these noises? Do Jewish people speak in tongues?
IRENE. Clive, sweet pea.
SID. Irene, no.
CLIVE. What—why are you staring at me, Sid?
SID. I love you.
CLIVE. What?
IRENE. (*Walking over, handing him the phone.*) Alright, we're going to make this short and sweet. And then we can do our best to forget this happened. Your boyfriend. The fag-bashing fascist with the nice hair.
CLIVE. How dare—
IRENE. You want me to keep going on this subject or do you want me to move on to tell you what I want? (*No answer.*) The Republican hall up on Walnut. That gorgeous brick Stanford White wannabe building. The one they're all abandoning for the glass box. Get me that old building. For free. We'll move for the fall.
SID. Irene!
IRENE. Call the boyfriend, get it for me.
CLIVE. I'm not. Why would I? Call my boyfriend or what?
IRENE. Men who live in glass houses shouldn't throw stones. Republican men who live in glass houses shouldn't have black boyfriends.
CLIVE. And you'd go public with that? (*Irene shrugs.*) You bitch, you monster!
IRENE. Who is the monster here? Who is the monster, I never ONCE have destroyed someone's life to get what I wanted. Your trick does it on a daily basis.
CLIVE. What do you call this?

IRENE. I'm not destroying your life, I'm saving it. And as for your boyfriend, that haza can go sit in his own filth as far as me and all the boys and girls who wanted to have a drink at the Covered Wagon are concerned. (*Picks the phone up and puts it back down in front of him.*) So. Mr. Civil-Rights. Mr. I-Won't-Say-"Nigra." Call him. Get the hall on Tenth street. Tenth and Walnut with the nice windows in the front. And the balcony inside. Seating capacity one hundred twenty I'm guessing.

CLIVE. (*Standing up.*) I...will call him from the dressing room. (*He storms out and then stops and shouts from the stage.*) I will never forgive you as long as I live, you hateful cow! (*He storms into the dressing room hole and rubble.*)

CAR. What just happened here?

SID. Okay. Irene. You have a new theater. Let's just calm down and no more crazy. Here's the list of next season.

IRENE. Sid, what happened when we did *Fantasticks*?

SID. We never did *Fantasticks*. There was—

IRENE. Exactly. Maria, be a love, get me the article you were reading about the shit-peddler and his season. That I threw.

SID. Oh my God, you are unsafe at any speed.

DAMIEN. What?

CAR. What am I missing?

MARIA. (*Handing her the article.*) Here.

SID. See—back then nobody ever did *Fantasticks* on account of the rape number, and the Kutztown Players, they had a hard-on for that show, but they never had the nerve to do it. So we put it into the Civic season. Only it was toward the end of the season so we wouldn't be getting to it for eleven months. Well Kutztown finally got the nerve together and decided it was now or never. So they did it four months before us. We had to drop it, who would come to see our version?

IRENE. First, we are going to do *Streetcar Named Desire*. Then, *Death of a Salesman*. Third, *Long Day's Journey into Night*. Then, *You Can't Take It with You*.

MARIA. Hey what about *Luv* by Murray Schisgal?

IRENE. Bimbo, you get to do Stella DuBois Kowalski and Alice Sycamore, I'd just shut up and smile if I were you.

SID. And then?

IRENE. Well, next June, which is when his season would start, Barry Schultz is shit out of luck. Which, if one is in the manure business...

DAMIEN. The people outside probably want to know if we're doing a show tonight.

IRENE. We're doing a show tonight, we're doing a whole season next year and— *(Clive, in full pirate costume, stomps across the stage into the office. He walks up to Irene.)*

CLIVE. The building is yours. You may pick up keys in twenty-four hours. It is yours for life. Oh and. My boyfriend has dumped me. I will do this show, and I will never work with you—

IRENE. Clive, darling—

CLIVE. EH!!! Never work with you again. As long as I live. And if anyone asks me about this theater company and its practices I will trash it to the four winds. You really are a shit, Irene. *(He storms off, back across the stage and into the dressing room.)*

SID. Irene, how could you—

IRENE. Baby, he's in costume. If he were really mad, he'd leave. Now we need something big. Bigger—

SID. No bigger.

IRENE. Up till now we've just survived, anyone can survive. We have to thrive. What can we do that no one else can?

SID. Who's going to play Stanley Kowalski? Clive? Come on—

IRENE. What—new—something new. Of course. We're going to do a new play.

SID. You're demented.

IRENE. Improv. No, I hate that.

SID. Jo Jo, Barry, Clive, Clive's ex. That's four lives you've destroyed now. And you haven't even given the curtain speech.

IRENE. A new play. A new play about... this town. About the people of our area. A new play written by HIM. *(She points to Car.)*

CAR. I...don't know how to write a play.

IRENE. The critics said your bios were funnier than the last play.

CAR. But the last play was by Eugene O'NEILL!!

IRENE. Car, you are writing a play, a fucking beautiful play and—

CAR. But—

IRENE. Shah! We go into rehearsal in three weeks—Damien, you stay by Car's side day and night and get it out of him.

DAMIEN. OH. Come on, lady.

IRENE. Inspire him, Damien. Maria, go out on the sidewalk, tell the audience we're starting on time, CHRIST I hope the lights work. *(Maria runs off.)*

DAMIEN. I still haven't tried the harness yet.

IRENE. Sid did you get a boy harness or a girl harness?
SID. There are different harnesses?
DAMIEN. It's gonna crush my balls!
IRENE. Car, help Damien into the harness.
CAR. I'll help you get in.
DAMIEN. Uhm, thanks kid. *(Just Sid and Irene. Car stops and watches as his adult self.)*
IRENE. So we'll do *Streetcar* in September and—and—New play. New play. What am I saying? We move this summer, then new play in September—New... *(She looks at Sid.)*
SID. What?
IRENE. Sid. *(Irene walks over, gets the phone, and puts it in front of Sid.)*
SID. No.
IRENE. I need you to call Madeline.
SID. No. Fucking Deal.
IRENE. She works for the governor. For the arts, we write a play about this area, goddamnit, we should be getting state money. MY GOD our governor is named MILTON SHAPP, we have a Democrat and a Jewish person as governor, the arts should be thriving!!
SID. I will not call—why—Why do you do this to me? Clive, maybe some kind of political or social revenge but why me—why do you choose me?
IRENE. Because Madeline owes it to you. The shit she pulled. The year she planned her departure and wedding. The scarf you bought her—that she wears now on television on Channel 8. It's all I can do not to puke, why can't you be as angry? Don't you love yourself even a little? Enough to just hate her. Call her. Get us a grant and citation from the state.
SID. This is blackmail.
IRENE. One day homosexuality will be as normal as blueberry buckle and we won't be able to blackmail and frankly I don't know how we'll put on a show. *(Sid starts to cry at the telephone. Irene walks up to her and puts a hand on her shoulder.)*
SID. What would I even say?
IRENE. You say the *Reading Eagle* said this writer is funnier than O'Neill. *(Irene is about to go onstage. There is Maria.)*
MARIA. A new theater, a new season—how are you going to pay for the move and all those shows? It's exciting.
IRENE. Maria, about that mink stole.
MARIA. You didn't!

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