

There is No Play Go Home
A Premiers 44 Original

Characters: (roles are not gender specific and can be played by anyone.)

Stage Manager (played by actor, not actual Stage Manager)

Actor/Actress

Random Stagehand (this can be an actual stagehand; they have no lines and only appear twice)

There is the blackout typical of the time between shows, but this one lasts a little a longer. Sounds of arguing can be heard off stage. Finally, an angry "FINE" is heard. A spotlight goes up center stage in which Stage Manager hurriedly runs towards, as if they were supposed to be there when it went up, but they missed their cue.

Stage Manager:

Hello folks, my name is [name], and I am the Stage Manager of this production and I would like to thank all of you for coming out during these...interesting times that we live in to partake in the joys of live theater. As the saying goes, there are only two certainties in life, death and theater kids incessantly nagging you to give a fuck about live theater and given the times we are living in we are overjoyed that you prioritized the second certainty over the first. With that being said, it is with great displeasure that I inform you that the final play we have slotted tonight has been pulled last minute by its playwright for being "devoid of wit, humor or life, and suggests a less than elementary command of the English language," well that's what I told him before he, for some reason, decided to pull it, anyway. To that point, it is with sadness in my heart that I say there is no play, go home.

The lights go up, the end of show music begins to play. Stage Manager begins to go off when a random stagehand runs out holding a binder and hands it to Stage Manager

Stage Manager:

(taking the binder from the stagehand, who promptly runs off)

Wait a minute folks looking at the bylaws of this theater, we must provide you, our lovely audience with the number of shows originally promised on the advertisements lest we be sued for false advertising. Additionally, as it says here, we reserve the right to utilize an audience member to fulfill this obligation given the circumstance in which a playwright pulls their play for any reason including, but not limited to, the reason for removal being the play in question is "Devoid of wit, humor, or life" and "with a less than elementary command of the English language."

(Looks directly at audience)

Well you couldn't have asked for a more perfect and totally not contrived coincidence. Alright, random audience member it is then. Now don't look at me sir you should have read the fine print on the ticket. Hmmm how about...

Just then Actor walks in through audience entrance

Stage Manager:

You! You got here late! So I'm sure you have a good story to fill the time. Just think of it as a monologue.

Actor:
(Softly)

Well, I don't know...

Stage Manager:

Louder please!

Actor:

I said, I don't know.

Stage Manager:

Louder, really project!

Actor:
(screaming)

I don't know!

Stage Manager:

No need to yell. Let's give it up for our brave volunteer everybody!

Actor moves to Center Stage and stands awkwardly next to Stage Manager. Unsure of what to do next they bow grandly.

Stage Manager:

No silly, you save your bows for the *end* of the show, but hey, I love the enthusiasm!

Actor:

I'm sorry, I'm not much of an actor.

Stage Manager:

Well, you got that right. Oh, I know. Let's get you into the acting vibe by holding a mock audition. Because nothing helps get me more in the mood for acting than knowing my worth and skill level will be determined by initial impressions and a contextless monologues. Do you have any monologues in mind?

Actor:

Well, hmm. Ok how about this..."It is a period of civil war. Rebel spaceships striking from a hidden base, have won-

What? What the hell is that? Star Wars? Are you quoting Star Wars at me? God, you really are an amateur actor. How about something from Shakespeare? That's stuffy enough where people won't care about how you act because they'll just be getting off on how smart they feel for properly appreciating it.

Actor:

Ok umm...

(extremely wooden)

Romeo, Romeo, wherefore art thou Romeo? Deny thy father and refuse thy name, or if thou wilt not, be but sworn my love, and I'll no longer be a Capulet.

Stage Manager:

Well remember what I said earlier about people not caring because the whole smart thing, you proved me wrong. But since we're doing a mock audition here. let's get the opinion of the audience, shall we?

Stage Manager picks three audience members from the front row and asks each one for their opinion in succession. A simple ok suffices after the first two impressions. After the last one the following may occur:

If all dislike it:

Stage Manager:

My thoughts exactly, maybe you special three have a future career in theater, well when it comes to casting anyway.

If two dislike it and the other likes it:

Stage Manager:

Well, at least some of you have taste, either way, it's probably a good thing this is just a mock audition and none of you are handling casting calls.

If one dislikes, it and the rest like it:

Stage Manager:

Well, at least one of you has taste, I guess it's a good thing this is just a mock audition and none of you are handling casting calls.

If they all like it:

Stage Manager:

Hmmm, maybe I should have picked a different audience sample, let's just hope you three don't represent the general public. It's a good thing this is just a mock audition and none of you are handling casting calls.

Stage Manager:

Well anyway, that's neither here nor there. I'm going to be honest; I'm beginning to have second thoughts about our choice of completely random and unprepared audience member. Alright, row A-2 you're up!

Actor:

Please, I can do better!

Stage Manager:

Well that's the best acting I've seen out of you all night.

Actor:

This might sound strange, but I've always wanted to be a
(dramatic stage flourish)
PERFORMER!

Stage Manager:

Well I'll be darned where was that energy just moments ago? And I thought you said that you weren't much of an actor.

Actor:

I was just a little nervous, and besides, I said PERFORMER not Actor. It's true that I'm a pretty lousy actor.

Stage Manager:

Couldn't fool me. Then under what would you categorize yourself as as a
(Mockingly imitating Actor's dramatic flourish)
PeRfOrMer

Actor:

I'm more of a
(another dramatic flourish, oblivious to the mocking town used by Stage Manager)
COMEDIAN!

Stage Manager:

Trust me, that sounded a lot cooler in your head. But I'll bite, show us something funny.

Actor:

Well, it doesn't work like that, I need to be in the zone.

Stage Manager:

The zone?

Actor:

Yeah, the funny zone. Like the mental state where I'm struck by the muses and the joke just pours from me like water out of a fountain.

Stage Manager:

(Dumbfounded, a beat)

Ok, A-2 I hope you're ready because we promised everyone a play and you're next. A-2! A-2!

Actor:

Ok, ok so this one time I was on the bus, right?

Stage Manager:

I am at the edge of my seat.

Actor:

Alright so I take my seat, and everything is going normal...

Stage Manager:

This one of them antijokes?

Actor:

Just wait! Ok? Anyway this old lady gets on the bus and she's looking at me real funny. Like she just starts staring at me. So what do I do when someone looks at me funny? I look back funnier. So me and this old lady are in this sort of staring contest, right? And people are looking at me like I'm the weird one. Mothers are pulling their kids in closer some punk kids are trying not to stare by looking overly enthralled in their phones. But like this lady, she's the one who was staring at me. She's the weird one in this situation, I'm perfectly normal! But like, it was just dead-on eye contact for my entire 10-minute bus ride. I swear she didn't blink even once. Not one No matter what. I'd sort of like try to startle her like (claps) like (claps again). Nothing. You know, at some point and I'm not making this up, a fly, A FLY landed on her eye and she didn't even so much as flinch! At this point I started to worry if she just up and died right there on the bus. I began to think that maybe the people around me, all the other passengers thought somehow, somehow, I was the one who killed her. Like this officer, hell if I know why an officer was on the bus, but he kind of looked at me and did that...you know that things like with the fingers pointing from his eyes to mine, like (does the "I'm watching you gesture") Eventually I get off the bus, thank god, and I'm just glad that whole ordeal is over. Like I'm hardcore sweating, my nerves are just shot. I catch my breath and the bus is pulling away the old lady is still staring at me through the bus window and slowly, but surely, I see her pull up a wallet. At first, I'm like, damn creepy old lady has good taste in wallets it's just like- (feels back pockets) wait a fucking minute.

Stage Manager:

I suppose that wasn't so bad...

(aside)
for stand up. That was your divinely inspired joke?

Actor:
What? No, that's just why I was late for the show. I felt I should share since you asked earlier.
This is my divinely inspired joke:

(Actor rubs their hands together as if they are warming up for something earth shattering)
Ok what do you call a Lizard with no eyes. Huh Huh?

(A beat or two)
A Lzard. Get it? Because no "eyes" Get it? No eyes? Like the letter I and the body part...

Stage Manager:
You're kidding me, right? You're really kidding me.

Actor:
Well yeah, that IS the point of a joke.

Stage Manager:
That's just a worst version of the fsh joke.

Actor:
The what joke?

Stage Manager:
What do you call a FISH with no "I" s?

Actor:
I'm not sure.

Stage Manager:
(exasperated)
A FSSSSSHHHHHH it's called a FFFFFFFSSHSSHHHH!

Actor:
(a beat or two, probably more than is actually necessary)
Ha...Ha.... HAahahahah. Hey, that's actually a pretty good one! A FSSSSHHH! HA! Classic!
You're right, that is way better than my lizard joke. Do you mind if I write that down?

Stage Manager:
Alright thank you so much everyone for coming out but we really don't want to drag this out any more than we already have....

The stagehand pokes out from backstage and indicates the section of the bylaws that dictate the show must go on.

Stage Manager:

Alright fine...so you can't act. You're not funny. I'm almost afraid to ask, but can you sing?

Actor:

Can I sing?

Stage Manager:

Lord give me strength. Yes. Is part of your er... skillset as a
(Stage Manager starts to do a sarcastic dramatic flourish but gives up halfway through)
PERF-ah forget it.

Actor:

Well, I never really considered myself a singer, but I can try. Alright...

Actor does a series of vocal scales, poorly and off key. They then do a series of stretches that makes it look more like they are preparing to run for a marathon than to start singing.

Stage Manager:

I can't watch.

Stage Manager hurries backstage as Actor continues to stretch and warm up their voice. They then stand up straight, crack their knuckles out in front of them and spray some Listerine breath spray into their mouth. They make a few weird faces and hit themselves in the face a couple times. They hyperventilate for a bit. The actor playing Actor can feel free to freestyle a bit here, go for a physical comedy sort of vibe. After just enough time, but not too much time has passed the play continues

Actor:

Ok I think, I'm ready.

The actor gives a thumbs up to the tech booth. "I Want it that Way" by the Backstreet Boys starts to play. Actor sings the first yeah but messes it up...badly. They then cough violently. The music stops. Maybe someone from the tech booth yells "Hey you good down there?"

Actor:

Yeah, I'm perfect. Can, can we do this again, please?

The music starts again, this time actor sings it perfectly. As the chorus hits the actor playing Actor can work the stage a bit and encourage the audience to join in. If they have souls, they will. If lack of soul is a concern plants in the audience are recommended. The lighting changes to from a plain spotlight to purplish disco light if possible. About midway through the chorus Stage Manager reenters, at first hesitantly then fully. Depending on legality the song can play through until the second chorus where it fades out near the end. The lights come back up.

Stage Manager:

What can I say...I'm stunned? You can't act. You aren't funny but wow, you really can s-
(A cellphone rings)

Oh hold that thought. Yes, hello.

(Annoyed sigh)

Hi, Travis. Oh really? You will! I mean...we're kind of out of time. Yeah, the shows over. Sorry you missed it ya goober. Maybe write something better next ti-

(Stops and looks up at audience)

Wait, what are you all still doing here? The show's over. That's it! There's no more! See ya!
Goodbye! There is no play. Go home!