

The Captain of a Creative Ship

A play by Alex Acuff

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Cast of Characters

| | |
|-----------|----------------------------|
| DIRECTOR. | <i>Forties or fifties.</i> |
| TIM. | <i>Thirties.</i> |
| BRIANA. | <i>Thirties.</i> |
| JORDAN. | <i>Twenties.</i> |
| FLASH. | <i>Thirties.</i> |

Scene:

A theater.

Time:

Present.

*A (/) indicates where the next speech begins.

ACT 1
Scene One
“The Dragon”

AT RISE: (*TIM stands in the spotlight. The DIRECTOR sits behind a table.*)

TIM: That was too dramatic, wasn't it?

DIRECTOR: (*Shuffling papers.* We'll be in touch.

TIM: Did you get my photos?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

TIM: (*Leaving.*) Thank you.

DIRECTOR: Send the next person in.

BRIANA: (*Entering after a few seconds.*) Hello.

DIRECTOR: What's your name?

BRIANA: I go by Briana.

DIRECTOR: What do you have for us today, Briana?

BRIANA: Today, I have a selection from one of my favorite plays, by the masterful Tennessee Williams. It will be from—

DIRECTOR: Do you have something else?

BRIANA: I can sing a song.

DIRECTOR: What song?

BRIANA: Sondheim's — (*singing.*)

DIRECTOR: Do you have anything else?

BRIANA: Mamet?

DIRECTOR: Fuck no.

BRIANA: What about a piece that I wrote?

DIRECTOR: That's great.

BRIANA: I was eleven-and-a-half when —

DIRECTOR: We'll be in touch.

BRIANA: Is that all?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

BRIANA: (*Leaving.*) Thank you for your time.

DIRECTOR: Send the next person in.

JORDAN: (*Entering after a few seconds.* Hello!

DIRECTOR: What's your name?

JORDAN: I'm Jordan.

DIRECTOR: What do you have for us today, Jordan?

JORDAN: Well, I have—

DIRECTOR: Please don't say Tennessee Williams.

JORDAN: Better. O'Neil.

DIRECTOR: Do you have anything else?

JORDAN: I have a Shakespearian piece.

DIRECTOR: Which one?

JORDAN: Malvolio from Twelfth Night. Some are born great, some achieve greatness, and some have greatness thrust upon them.

DIRECTOR: How would you feel about making up a monologue?

JORDAN: Like improv?

DIRECTOR: I need you to be a real person.

JORDAN: Sure.

DIRECTOR: Don't care so much about everything—like—realize that it doesn't matter and nobody cares at the end of the day.

JORDAN: Right, nobody cares.

DIRECTOR: This is literally meaningless. People are dying from Ebola. There's fucked up shit out there. You're here. It's just you in your head—caring—but no one else does. Remember that for a second. No one cares about this.

JORDAN: What?

DIRECTOR: Don't care.

JORDAN: Okay.

DIRECTOR: You don't care?

JORDAN: No.

DIRECTOR: Sure?

JORDAN: I mean, a little. Isn't it a human quality to care though? We want to do well and succeed, don't we? That's our nature.

DIRECTOR: You should always want to fail.

JORDAN: I should?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

JORDAN: Why do I want to fail?

DIRECTOR: You're not here for success because success is a label that we've given to people who sell out and become superheroes.

JORDAN: Well—

DIRECTOR: We'll be in touch soon.

JORDAN: That was quick.

DIRECTOR: Yes.

JORDAN: And you got my photos?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

JORDAN: (*Leaving.*) Thank you so much for your time.

DIRECTOR: Send the next person in.

FLASH: (*Entering after a few seconds.*) Sup.

DIRECTOR: Hello. What's your name?

FLASH: Flash.

DIRECTOR: Hello Flash. What have you prepared today?

FLASH: (*Handing him a folder.*) I got my resume.

DIRECTOR: Do you have a monologue?

FLASH: I can work holidays.

DIRECTOR: Have you prepared a monologue?

FLASH: What?

DIRECTOR: A speech.

FLASH: I got my resume.

DIRECTOR: Okay.

FLASH: Saturday, I have to watch my little girl; baby-mama has to go out with her friends and her grandma can't watch her either.

DIRECTOR: How refreshing.

FLASH: Are these open interviews for Biscuit King?

DIRECTOR: Across the street.

FLASH: Oh damn, man. Are you serious?

DIRECTOR: Yeah.

FLASH: Shit balls. Sorry, man.

DIRECTOR: No problem. No problem at all. I completely understand. It's really hard to miss the big crown on top of the guy's head.

FLASH: Right?

DIRECTOR: Yeah.

FLASH: (*Leaving.*) Have a good day, man.

DIRECTOR: You too.

TIM: (*Entering after a few seconds.*) Give me another shot. I can do it. One more chance, and I'll act circles around this place right now.

DIRECTOR: We'll be in touch.

TIM: I can cry on command.

DIRECTOR: That's nice.

TIM: I can.

DIRECTOR: Not surprising.

TIM: I work harder than anyone else. I spend so much time working on this. I care so much about what I do, it's crazy.

DIRECTOR: Shhh. Shut up.

TIM: Okay.

DIRECTOR: Now, tell me to shut up.

TIM: Sorry?

DIRECTOR: Don't say sorry.

TIM: Sorry.

DIRECTOR: No, don't be sorry. You're not sorry. You don't care, remember? You shouldn't have a worry in the world.

TIM: I don't.

DIRECTOR: Tell me to go screw myself.

TIM: But—

DIRECTOR: We'll be in touch, Tim.

TIM: No, no! I'm sorry! Go screw yourself! There, I said it! Go screw yourself! Go screw yourself! That was three times!

DIRECTOR: Who do you think you're talking to?

TIM: I'm sorry.

DIRECTOR: And you just failed again. I keep giving you opportunities to show how little you care, and you keep caring.

TIM: I don't care!

DIRECTOR: Do you care if you get this part?

TIM: I could care less if I get this part. I don't want this part. I hate this part. The last thing I want is this part.

DIRECTOR: You're trying too hard.

TIM: Sorry.

DIRECTOR: We'll be in touch, Tim.

TIM: No!

DIRECTOR: I'm sorry.

TIM: This is outrageous!

DIRECTOR: Well—

TIM: I've let you berate me this entire time! I will not be walked over by someone who doesn't even know me!

DIRECTOR: Well, you—

TIM: Furthermore, you are being unprofessional.

DIRECTOR: Am I?

TIM: The way you have talked is not appropriate! I worked hard for this, not because I need your approval, or because I'd like to be successful, but because I love this. I eat, breathe, and live this stuff! Okay?

DIRECTOR: That's what I'm talking about, Tim.

JORDAN: (*Entering.*) Excuse me.

DIRECTOR: What?

JORDAN: Do you have any feedback?

DIRECTOR: No.

JORDAN: (*Leaving.*) Thanks for your time.

TIM: I'm sorry about what just happened.

DIRECTOR: Don't be.

TIM: Oh, right. I'm *not* sorry.

DIRECTOR: So you reached this real part of you—this raw, deep part—now you have to reach it again, but within a story. And here's the trick: when you start, don't go back to the way you were. Don't sink back into muscle memory and repetition. You have to unleash that; it's a dragon and you shouldn't tame it. You should let it spit fire.

TIM: Okay.

DIRECTOR: Tell me a story.

TIM: Sure.

DIRECTOR: You only get three sentences.

TIM: That's hard.

DIRECTOR: Only if you are making the story something that it doesn't have to be. It's simple in concept so keep it that way.

TIM: Three sentences?

DIRECTOR: And you don't care.

TIM: Well...

DIRECTOR: Too much.

TIM: If you'd give me a chance!

DIRECTOR: Don't raise your voice.

TIM: I don't care!

DIRECTOR: Seriously, that's enough.

TIM: Whatever!

DIRECTOR: Just tell me a story. Now, you're going too far. Tell me the story and have nothing to win from your venture. You're investing in something without wanting a return. You are not here for profit or monetary gain. You are not a shark. You are a soul, a source of light in the darkness. An evolved animal with a penis. You are something great and weak at the same time. You have to realize that here, your power comes from your ability to summon truth at the drop of a hat. With great power comes a little bit of responsibility.

DAKOTA: I went to the computer store.

DIRECTOR: Good.

DAKOTA: I had to drop off my computer so they could fix the screen. Then I went across the street to the hot-dog shop. I skateboarded with these kids.

DIRECTOR: Good.

DAKOTA: I was jealous of them.

DIRECTOR: And then what?

TIM: I picked up my computer.

DIRECTOR: How'd it feel being around the kids?

TIM: Fine.

DIRECTOR: I'm losing you here, okay. Now you don't care, which is good, but just because you don't care about success, doesn't mean you're unfocused. It doesn't mean that you're not here in this space trying to communicate.

TIM: I'm trying.

DIRECTOR: How did you feel about the kids?

TIM: Uh...

DIRECTOR: Remember the dragon; it's the part of you that spreads its wings. Access that and spit it out of your face like molten lava. Craft the blade and wield it at your own discretion. Bake the cookies and then share them, after you eat a few for quality control. Be the captain of your own creative ship!

TIM: I got this.

DIRECTOR: Do you have this?

TIM: Yeah.

DIRECTOR: Are you sure you have this?

TIM: Oh yeah.

DIRECTOR: You've said that a lot, but then you fail me. I don't like success, but I also don't like failure. We're going for balance.

TIM: Well, uh, they get to live such simple lives. I want to go back to that time, when that was all I had to concern myself with. They reminded me of my own kids, but they scared me, because soon my kids will be that old.

DIRECTOR: Keep going.

TIM: I miss the innocence of being young.

DIRECTOR: That's sad.

TIM: I guess.

DIRECTOR: But you have to be strong. You have to be weak in the right moments, but overall, you have to be strong. You have to have fortitude.

TIM: What?

DIRECTOR: You're not right for this part.

TIM: Why?

DIRECTOR: You're still trying too hard.

TIM: Am I, or are you?

DIRECTOR: Ah, you're on to me! Very good! You've solved the case! A study in douchebag! Bravo! It was all an act!

TIM: I'm going to go now.

DIRECTOR: Not interested?

TIM: I don't know what you're asking.

DIRECTOR: You're good.

TIM: Am I?

DIRECTOR: I think you are.

TIM: Okay?

DIRECTOR: So then yeah.

TIM: Yeah?

DIRECTOR: Yeah.

TIM: Thanks for that.

DIRECTOR: Yeah.

TIM: I'm working on everything.

DIRECTOR: Good.

TIM: Yeah.

DIRECTOR: Yeah.

TIM: It's a work in progress.

DIRECTOR: Good.

TIM: What's happening?

DIRECTOR: Yeah.

TIM: I'm going to go now.

DIRECTOR: Are you?

TIM: Yes.

DIRECTOR: I'll give you a callback

TIM: What?

DIRECTOR: Tell me your darkest secret. Something that you've never told anyone.
Something that unleashes the dragon.

TIM: I can't think of any.

DIRECTOR: You better tell me something soon.

FLASH: *(Entering.)* Sup guys?

DIRECTOR: Yes, may I help you?

FLASH: Hey man, I'm done with Biscuit King, so I figured I'd come back and try to

get a job here, if that's cool.

DIRECTOR: Wait in the lobby.

FLASH: You still have my resume?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

FLASH: (*Leaving.*) Cool, cool, cool.

DIRECTOR: Secret time.

TIM: I still can't think of any.

DIRECTOR: Tell me something raw.

TIM: Uh...

DIRECTOR: I want to hear about the time you slapped your best friend, got in a fight, and you both had black eyes! That little bitch! I want to hear about the time you stole a bicycle to sell it for drugs. You drug addict! That's why your family doesn't love you anymore! I want to hear about the time that you got so wasted off tequila, you vomited, called your ex and told her she was a cunt, drove to your parents, rang the doorbell, and then left when they came to the door, because deep down, there's a part of you that can't face them! Deep down, you're ashamed of the adult you've become and you know it's not who they raised you to be!

TIM: Did you do all of that?

DIRECTOR: Only a few things. I'm making stuff up, which is what you should be doing. You should be creating like a boss.

TIM: You've been keeping me from creating.

DIRECTOR: You're a champ.

TIM: I am?

DIRECTOR: I keep coming after you, but you don't quit. That was great. Most people

give up quickly, but not you.

TIM: You've been messing with me?

DIRECTOR: That was the dragon.

TIM: What?

DIRECTOR: You were about to go fisty-cuffs with me.

TIM: I'm confused.

DIRECTOR: Are you free tomorrow afternoon?

TIM: Uh, yes.

DIRECTOR: How does three sound?

TIM: What?

DIRECTOR: Callbacks tomorrow.

TIM: Seriously?

DIRECTOR: No, I'm just messing with you. Kidding. I'm not messing with you. I don't know what I'm doing. Will you be here?

TIM: I'm not sure yet.

DIRECTOR: Why?

TIM: Because I'm a bit upset.

DIRECTOR: Good.

TIM: I don't like being messed with.

DIRECTOR: It worked.

TIM: What worked?

DIRECTOR: I got you out of your head and into your skin. You're here now. You were somewhere else, but now you're here.

TIM: I feel way more in my head.

DIRECTOR: I'll see you tomorrow?

TIM: (*Leaving.*) Okay. See you tomorrow.

The DIRECTOR paces around. They look through some notes. They spend a moment playing hopscotch.

FLASH: (*Entering.*) How much do you guys pay?

DIRECTOR: Depends.

FLASH: On what?

DIRECTOR: These are auditions for an experimental show in theater. Are you aware of this? Does that sound interesting to you?

FLASH: As long as it pays.

DIRECTOR: It does.

FLASH: I can't work Saturdays.

DIRECTOR: That's fine.

FLASH: Cool, cool. It's just this thing with my daughter, her mama can't take care of her and my grandma can't—

DIRECTOR: We don't rehearse on Saturdays.

FLASH: Cool.

DIRECTOR: What's your experience?

FLASH: I've worked at about ten different restaurants so far. I worked at a bank. I

worked at a summer camp for Jewish kids.

DIRECTOR: How was that?

FLASH: Fun.

DIRECTOR: What else?

FLASH: Uh, well...oh, I, uh, worked as one of those guys who hold the sign by the road, and dance and stuff.

DIRECTOR: That's a kind of performance, isn't it?

FLASH: Oh, I killed it.

DIRECTOR: You're perfect for this.

FLASH: Thanks.

DIRECTOR: Are you free tomorrow?

FLASH: Yeah.

DIRECTOR: Can you be here at three?

FLASH: Yeah.

DIRECTOR: One more question: would you be willing to let someone punch you in the face, if I pay you some money?

FLASH: What?

DIRECTOR: Would you take a punch to the face for money?

FLASH: How much money?

DIRECTOR: (*Getting a few bills out of his wallet.*) This much.

FLASH: That's not enough to get punched.

DIRECTOR: *(Pulling out more bills.)* Okay, here.

FLASH: Now you're speaking my language.

DIRECTOR: Good.

FLASH: Who's punching me?

DIRECTOR: A small man.

FLASH: Does he have a good hook?

DIRECTOR: I'm not sure.

FLASH: Why do you want him to punch me?

DIRECTOR: Enough questions.*(Pause.)* You have your money. Don't tell anyone about this.

FLASH: Is this the job? Getting punched? Because I can't come in everyday and get hit in the face. It'd add up after a while.

DIRECTOR: This is a one-time thing.

FLASH: Can I punch back?

DIRECTOR: No.

FLASH: That's lame.

DIRECTOR: He might not do anything. From what I can tell, he's not much of a go getter. I'm trying to get him out of his comfort zone.

FLASH: Can I kick him?

DIRECTOR: No, you violent child.

FLASH: Hey, you're the boss. You say get punched in the face, I get punched in the face. I'll punch myself in the face if you want.

DIRECTOR: You can go now.

FLASH: Is this legal?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

FLASH: My probation officer might check.

DIRECTOR: It's legal.

FLASH: Man, the law is messed up!

DIRECTOR: It's experimental.

FLASH: You said this is a show, right?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

FLASH: A legal show?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

FLASH: Cool, cool, cool. *(Pause.)* So tomorrow at three?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

FLASH: *(Leaving.)* I'll be here, man.

The DIRECTOR looks over some notes and photos. They pull out a recording device and record their thoughts.

DIRECTOR: Experiment five of five. Group three of four, first day. Experimental group, one of two. Four subjects total. Three male, one female. Power dynamics, as always, were present. All four submitted. One briefly questioned, but reverted back. Hypothesis restated: "no amount of absurdity, in the given setting, can dissolve the power structure between subjects and leader." First two control groups: no challenges to authority on either days with no levels of absurdity. Consistent with the other four experiments. First experimental group: no challenges to authority so far, with extreme levels of absurdity. Consistent with the other four experiments. Day two is tomorrow; Sunday,

March 1st, 2020.

Blackout.

ACT II

Scene One

“Group Four, Day Two”

AT RISE: (*The DIRECTOR sets up a few chairs. JORDAN enters.*)

JORDAN: Hello.

DIRECTOR: Good afternoon, Jordan. You can warm up anywhere. Everyone should be here soon, so do whatever you'd like.

JORDAN: Okay.

DIRECTOR: Do I have your conflicts?

JORDAN: I don't have any.

DIRECTOR: Great.

JORDAN: I might be going out of town next weekend.

DIRECTOR: Just remember that we're going to rehearse for six months, every other week, but every Sunday, except for Sundays at the end of the month. And we'll do Saturdays in June and July, except the third Saturday of June, and the second Saturday of July. Oh, and in July, we'll have no Sunday rehearsals because of the solstice.

JORDAN: (*Checking a calendar on his phone.*) Yeah, that should work for me.

DIRECTOR: Good. (*Pause.*) Can I ask you something, Jordan?

JORDAN: Absolutely.

DIRECTOR: You seem like someone who goes above and beyond. I was thinking that maybe you'd like to try an exercise for me.

JORDAN: Oh, sure thing.

DIRECTOR: I'm considering you for the lead role.

JORDAN: Really?

DIRECTOR: Yes, you're my first choice.

JORDAN: I'm honored.

DIRECTOR: So this exercise is for you only.

JORDAN: Gotcha.

DIRECTOR: No one else needs to know.

JORDAN: Okay.

DIRECTOR: At various times today, I want you to yell out this exact phrase: "I'd like to go to the park with my friends."

JORDAN: Okay.

DIRECTOR: Say that for me.

JORDAN: Sure.

JORDAN: Yell out the phrase.

JORDAN: Um, I'd like to go to the park with my friends?

DIRECTOR: Brilliant.

JORDAN: So yell it out at random times?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

JORDAN: Is it a line for the lead?

DIRECTOR: Eh, yes.

JORDAN: Okay, I can definitely do that.

DIRECTOR: Fantastic.

BRIANA enters.

BRIANA: Hello.

DIRECTOR: Good afternoon. Briana. Drop your stuff anywhere, and warm up however you like. You do your own thing and we'll convene soon.

JORDAN: Where's the bathroom?

DIRECTOR: Down the hall..

JORDAN: *(Leaving.)* Gotcha

BRIANA: How long will this be?

DIRECTOR: A couple hours.

BRIANA: Really?

DIRECTOR: Do you have somewhere else to be?

BRIANA: No, no.

DIRECTOR: Good.

BRIANA: Was only wondering.

DIRECTOR: What do you do, Briana?

BRIANA: I teach.

DIRECTOR: Really?

BRIANA: Yeah, elementary school.

DIRECTOR: You have the heart of a caregiver.

BRIANA: On my good days.

DIRECTOR: I'm considering you for the lead role.

BRIANA: Seriously?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

BRIANA: That's awesome.

DIRECTOR: Don't get too excited. *(Pause.)* You're my first choice.

BRIANA: Sweet.

DIRECTOR: But, I need you to do something for me today. It's an exercise to see if you really "go there", if you know what I mean?

BRIANA: Oh, yeah.

DIRECTOR: No one else needs to know that you're doing this.

BRIANA: *("Zipping" her lips shut.)* Lips sealed.

DIRECTOR: At random times today, I'd like for you to yell out different vacation spots. Anywhere you might go on vacation, yell it out.

BRIANA: That sounds kind of silly.

DIRECTOR: I'm testing your improv skills.

BRIANA: Right.

DIRECTOR: So go ahead and try.

BRIANA: Right now?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

BRIANA: Okay, so, uh...I don't know.

DIRECTOR: Not good so far.

BRIANA: The mountains?

DIRECTOR: Great.

BRIANA: So just at random times?

DIRECTOR: Yes.

BRIANA: People are going to think I'm weird.

DIRECTOR: That's part of acting, Briana. You get up and act weird. This is a weird thing we do. You should want to be weird if you want the lead role.

BRIANA: I'll try my best.

DIRECTOR: Excellent.
(*FLASH and TIM enter.*)
Hello, gentleman. Put your stuff anywhere you'd like, preferably against the wall, and warm up at your own discretion.

FLASH: (*Pulling them to the side.*) Hey man, can I talk to you?

DIRECTOR: Sure.

FLASH: I've never done this before.

DIRECTOR: That's cool, Flash. Remember what we talked about. Allow everything to happen, if it happens. You're my first choice for the lead role.

FLASH: You still want me to get—

DIRECTOR: Yes.

FLASH: How much does it pay again?

DIRECTOR: The contract is negotiable, but around a couple hundred.

FLASH: How long?

DIRECTOR: We'll rehearse for six months.

