

great scenes for actors

AND HOW TO ACT THEM

**Original scenes for acting class and
acting coaching for each scene to help
you bring the scene to life!**

By Larry Silverberg

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Great Scenes for Actors & How to Act Them

By Larry Silverberg

Hello and welcome to my new book of scenes and acting coaching. For years now, I have been teaching my Meisner Certificate Training Program where I have trained actors and acting teachers from around the world. I also love writing scenes so it was a natural that I write scenes to use in my classes and I had so many requests from my students to put the scene into a book so that they could use them for auditions, for acting classes and for their acting reels.

I took the idea one step further by adding my “scene notes” to each scene so that you could learn a very specific way to approach working on text. In my coaching, you will learn some essential things about working with scripts.

I want to help you learn how to extract from the text the very things that will help you act the part. This is key. You must work in very simple and human ways and stay away from all intellectual theories and acting jargon that put you in your head. Rather, you must learn how to ask really great questions that inspire you to bring your own humanity, your unique voice to your acting so that you take on the role with deep personal meaning, with passion and vitality and with a true desire to take action. I also want you to have fun!

My suggestion is that you read every scene and the scene notes first, then pick a scene, get a partner and get to work! If you have any questions or just want to let me know about your work on the scenes, I'd love to hear from you. Please contact me via my website, trueactinginstitute.com

Best Wishes, Larry

Scene 1. Barney and Mona



Barney: (Enters) Hey.

Mona: Hey.

B: You working?

M: Almost finished, I think. Just get off?

B: He let me out early, I mopped the back down good, said he's closing early.

M: Uh huh. What do you think?

B: Yeah, yeah, I see where you're going, cool.

M: Really?

B: Love the perspective on this side.

M: Really?

B: Yeah, I do, what's this over here?

M: Just some shading.

B: A little heavy handed I think.

M: Yeah? Maybe you're right.

B: (suddenly erasing) Here, try this...

M: What the hell!

B: No, no, just a bit lighter is all.

M: Barney, stop, stop, what the hell!

B: No, just needs a bit of...

M: Stop I said, stop it! (He drops eraser, moves away) I can't hand it in now, Barney, what the hell...

B: It's ok, it's ok, I hardly touched it.

M: Don't you get it, it has to be all mine, how many times I have to tell you.

B: I know that but...

M: How many times do I have to tell you?

B: I was just trying to...

M: I can't use it now, I can't use it, why'd you go and do that?

B: 'Cause I'm nervous is why, ok, I'm nervous.

M: It's no excuse.

B: It's cause I'm very nervous.

M: So you erase my drawing?

B: I can't sleep, can't eat, walking around in a daze bumping into doors, tripping over my own feet, losing my wallet...

M: You don't just go and erase my drawing like that, you don't even know what you're erasing.

B: But you're not asking me why, Mona, you know, why I am nervous, you're not asking me.

M: I am pissed off Barney, don't you get that I am very angry with you?

B: Yeah, I get that, so ask me why for once.

M: Ok, so why, why Barney, why, what is your problem? Well? Spit it out, spit it out Barney.

B: It's 'cause I want to kiss you.

M: You what?

B: I want to kiss you Mona, I want to kiss you real bad.

M: You want to kiss me?

B: Since we were ten.

M: You want to kiss me?

B: You fell through the ice, I run to Samuel's, they come to pull you out, I'm screaming don't let her die the whole time I'm running, I'm holding on to you in Samuel's truck all the way to emergency, they can't pull me off, not even on the stretcher, I'm laying down with you all the way, wouldn't let you go I love you so much.

M: Oh.

B: Yeah.

M: Go ahead and kiss me.

B: I can't.

M: Go ahead and kiss me Barney.

B: I can't.

M: Why not?

B: If I do and you don't like it, you'll never talk to me again.

M: Go ahead and kiss me, Barney.

B: Promise you'll talk to me.

M: I am, I'm telling you to kiss me.

B: After, promise you decide you don't like it, you'll still talk to me.

M: How in the world can I know anything about after when you're not kissing me yet, How can I think about something that hasn't even happened?

B: I do, that's all I do, since we were ten, thinking about what would happen if I were to kiss you.

M: Well just go ahead and do it for goodness sake and find out.

B: I can't now.

M: Don't you want to find out?

B: You can't guarantee me the other side of the kiss I'm not taking that chance, Mona.

M: I opened my eyes, the first thing I see is your hair, feel your warm cheek on my ear, feel your breath on my neck, hear you whispering my name...

B: I wouldn't let go, not even on the stretcher, the whole way in, I would't let go of you. You still mad at me, for your picture?

M: Yeah.

B: (Suddenly, he hugs her tight, holds on for a long time, she hugs him back. He let's go, goes to door) Was that ok?

M: Yeah.

B: (He goes back to her, takes her face and kisses her cheek, goes to door) Was that ok?

M: Yeah, I liked that.

B: Ok. (He leaves, comes back in) Ok, good. (Exits)

Barney and Mona: Scene Notes

These are my first set of scene notes so let me share some basics. I wrote these scenes specifically for class use so you will be working on them out of context of a whole play because there is no play.

This means that you will have to make decisions about the circumstances for each character based on the information given to you in the scene only. The truth is, the actor always has to fill in many blanks as scripts do not give you all of the information. At the same time, the decisions you make must always be justified and inspired by the text.

It is very important to simplify things as you approach the scene. Who are the characters, what is their relationship, what are the circumstances, what is the "problem", where are the characters coming from emotionally before the scene begins, what is at stake right now, etc... Let's be simple, specific and clear.

The Relationship: Best Friends.

We know that Barney and Mona have been friends since childhood because Barney says that he has wanted to kiss Mona since they were ten years old.

It is clear that Barney loves Mona very much and he wants to be in a romantic relationship with her but he has been terrified to let her know. The source of his fear is that if she finds out he might lose his best friend forever. Isn't that really why he is afraid to kiss her? He says, *"You can't guarantee me the other side of the kiss I'm not taking that chance, Mona."*

We also know that the pressure to tell Mona how he feels has been building up inside Barney and his life has become unmanageable. He says, *"I can't sleep, can't eat, walking around in a daze bumping into doors, tripping over my own feet, losing my wallet..."*

The other big question the actor playing Barney must answer is "Why today?" Why has Barney come on a mission to tell Mona how he feels today? You could say that he just can't go on the way things have been, but that is still general. Because the scene doesn't tell us "why today" the actor must create a circumstance that makes telling Mona today absolutely necessary.

One more thing for Barney. In what condition must the actor playing Barney enter the room? Clearly he must be very, very nervous. This is why it is essential that the actor know that "Today is the day!" If it was possible to tell Mona just "any old day," why would he have to get those words about kissing her out in the open once and for all? Yes, this is the driving force of the scene for Barney, it has to happen today!

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Now let's talk about Mona.

Does Mona know that Barney is coming over to her place? No

Does she know that Barney has been in bad shape, tortured by how much he wants to tell her that he loves her? No.

There are only two main things we need to be clear about with Mona.

First, at the beginning of the scene what is she doing? She's drawing for an assignment. We know it's an assignment because she says, *"I can't hand it in now."*

Is this drawing important to Mona. Oh yes. It is the most important! The actors job is to come up with a drawing "activity" (that's what we call this in Meisner land) that is essential and deeply meaningful and analogous to the needs of the scene.

We also know that it is critical to Mona that she completes the assignment by herself. Mona says, *"Don't you get it, it has to be all mine,"* and, *"I can't use it now, I can't use it."* She has also warned Barney about this before, she says two times. *"How many times do I have to tell you."* This is a very big deal to Mona!

To the degree that the actress playing Mona cares about the drawing, the payoff will be how upset she is with Barney and we know in the scene she must be extremely upset with him.

One more thing to all you actresses playing Mona. You must not anticipate that Barney is going to erase your drawing. How do you not anticipate? If the drawing is actually important to you and if you are giving it your complete attention as you do it, you will actually be taken by surprise when Barney erases your drawing!

The second issue you must make a decision about is how Mona actually feels about Barney. What do you think? Does she like him simply as a friend or do you think her feelings, like Barney, are stronger than that.

The answer to this questions comes from a few things in the scene. First, Mona has a wonderful line that gives us a very strong hint. She says, *"I opened my eyes, the first thing I see is your hair, feel your warm cheek on my ear, feel your breath on my neck, hear you whispering my name..."* So she too has never forgotten this event from their childhood and the sweet, intense feelings of Barney hugging her in the hospital bed are still very much alive for her.

The other thing of course is that Mona wants Barney to kiss her. She wants to move beyond being friends to being in a romantic relationship with him and she encourages him to take the leap. To play Mona, the best choice you can make and the only one that will help you is that you have loved Barney for a long time but were afraid to tell him or do anything about it.

Scene 2. Bobby and Ralph



(Bobby enters, excited, he puts bananas into a paper bag. Puts on a shirt over his tee shirt and buttons it. Combs hair, etc. Ralph comes in with newspaper) Bobby. Wow, they did a real good job Dad, you wouldn't even know it got hit.

Ralph. Lucky for you, Bobby, lucky for you.

Bobby. Hey, I'm still getting the Hummer for my birthday, right?

Ralph. It's under consideration.

Bobby. You gave Sissy a BMW Convertible, Dad.

Ralph. It's your mother's now.

Bobby. Yeah, but Sissy wanted a Beemer and she got it.

Ralph. Don't know if it's in the cards Bobby.

Bobby. Dad, it was an impulse, the whole accident, it was an impulse, that's all it was.

Ralph. What I teach you?

Bobby. Yeah.

Ralph. Huh?

Bobby. To squash my impulses.

Ralph. So?

Bobby. I do, I do...

Ralph. You do, you do. You didn't.

Bobby. One time, Dad.

Ralph. Well, it cost me, you understand?

Bobby. I said I was sorry.

Ralph. Why do I have to keep shellin' out for your mistakes.

Bobby. I said I was sorry. I need the keys.

Ralph. I just brought it home, Bobby.

Bobby. I'm late.

Ralph. For what?

Bobby. I'm meeting Lucy at the zoo.

Ralph. Which Lucy?

Bobby. You know, Lucy, Lucy.

Ralph. Lou's nutty kid?

Bobby. Yeah.

Ralph. What? You got a date?

Bobby. Yeah.

Ralph. What happened to what's her face?

Bobby. Darlene.

Ralph. What happened to her?

Bobby. Nothing happened to her.

Ralph. She break up with you?

Bobby. I'm seeing Lucy.

Ralph. Darlene break up with you?

Bobby. Yeah.

Ralph. How many does that make?

Bobby. Give me the keys, Dad.

Ralph. How many does that make?

Bobby. Four.

Ralph. Four time loser, what's the matter with you?

Bobby. Give me the keys, Dad, I'm not taking no bus.

Ralph. What's the rush.

Bobby. I told her two thirty.

Ralph. So she'll wait.

Bobby. Come on, it's ten after now.

Ralph. What's in the bag?

Bobby. It's for Lucy.

Ralph. Give me the bag.

Bobby. I gotta go.

Ralph. Give me that bag. Bananas?

Bobby. She gets real hungry.

Ralph. They're rotten!

Bobby. They're ripe. She likes them ripe.

Ralph. This is what you bring? Rotten bananas? Come on, Bobby, it's a date, what's the matter with you! Bananas?

Bobby. I gotta go, Dad!

Ralph. Siddown, siddown, let her wait a while. Listen, if she wants something to eat, tell her to buy herself something at the snack bar. make things a little difficult for her. That's what they want, Bobby, that's what they like, to be bossed around. What girls really want is to be ignored and made to think that you could care less about them, it's the ape mentality, that's why football players have every girl drooling for them and in case you haven't noticed, you're no football player, never will be, so it is even more urgent, if you are ever going to get past first base, that you start acting aloof, distant, mean spirited, too busy enjoying your life to need anything from any girl.

Bobby. It's really late, Dad.

Ralph. What'd I just say to you?

Bobby. I heard you.

Ralph. What'd I say?

Bobby. Be mean.

Ralph. And boss her around. Understand?

Bobby. Yeah.

Ralph. Four time loser, you be the boss, understand?

Bobby. I understand. Can I please have the keys?

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Ralph. (gives him the keys.) No impulses.

Bobby. Yeah.

Ralph. You hear me?

Bobby. Yeah, I hear you. (Exits.)



Bobby and Ralph: Scene Notes

The Relationship: Father and Son.

Let's talk about Ralph. The first thing I want to deal with is a very basic acting truth - if you can't fall in love with the character, you can't play the part. Looking at this guy Ralph, you might say that falling in love with him is quite a challenge. You may say that Ralph is a tough, insensitive guy who is focused on money and power with an awful attitude towards women, what a terrible person! Many people reading the scene would agree with you. But you are not "most people" you are the actor who will be playing the part and this requires that you step inside Ralph's skin and see the world from his point of view.

To "fall in love with the character" demands that you find their humanity, what makes them tick and what is driving them. Characters may be flawed, like most human beings, but people believe they do things for the right reasons. They justify their behavior and their actions and they think of themselves in a positive way. You may not agree with them and you may have a very different point of view about the world, but if you can't step into their shoes in an authentic way, you will be limited forever to play just one character - yourself!

So where might you begin?

One way to fall in love with Ralph would be to imagine that, from his point of view, he is doing his best to take care of his family and that he wants them to be happy. This is why he works so hard, to provide the best for his family. He gives his daughter a BMW so she will be happy. He promised Bobby a Hummer for his birthday so that Bobby will be happy.

You could also say that Ralph is protecting his family. He buys only the best for them so that they are in safe and dependable cars. Even his advice to Bobby about girls is his way of being protective, he doesn't want Bobby to keep getting hurt, going through an ongoing series of failed relationships and having the continual heartbreak of being rejected by his girlfriends. In this way, his advice becomes loving and protective.

Let's get more specific regarding what's happening in the scene. What does Ralph know before the scene begins?

Ralph knows that Bobby drove carelessly and had an accident in his car and that the car has just been repaired and it was costly: *"Well, it cost me, you understand?"*

Ralph also knows that Bobby has done other "impulsive" things that have been costly: *"Why do I have to keep shellin' out for your mistakes."*

Although he can't remember her name, Ralph knows that Bobby has a girlfriend: *"What happened to what's her face?"*

And he knows that Bobby has had a string of failed relationships: *"How many does that make?"*

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One more thing. Ralph has a very specific idea of what attracts a woman: *"...it's the ape mentality, that's why football players have every girl drooling for them..."*

If you're playing Ralph, how might you begin the scene? The text doesn't define an activity but we know that Ralph recently brought the car back from the repair place. Did he just get home? Is he trying to calm down from seeing the big repair bill? What might you do as an activity to calm yourself down? Make a choice and give it a try, see where it takes you when you start to work with your acting partner.

Now let's talk about Bobby.

Here too, it would be easy for you to judge Bobby and say what a spoiled, pampered kid he is but you must not judge the characters you play, you must get inside their skin and see from their vantage point. I am using this scene with Ralph and with Bobby to make this acting essential absolutely clear.

My question to you is, what do you think is the most important thing in the world to Bobby right now?

The key words here are **"most important"** and **"right now."**

You might say that the most important thing is that the car got fixed and that should satisfy Dad. I would say that Bobby has done things like this before (as we established with Ralph's line, *"Why do I have to keep shellin' out for your mistakes."*) and Ralph still let him drive the car and, except for getting dumped by the girls, Bobby's life has gone along just fine. So, no, the most important thing going on for Bobby at the moment is not the repair of the car.

Clearly, the most important and wonderful thing in Bobby's life at this very moment is that he has a date with Lucy and everything he does in the scene is aimed at getting out of the house and going to the zoo with his bag of ripe bananas to see her! Isn't this why he says:

"Wow, they did a real good job Dad, you wouldn't even know it got hit."

Yes, he says this so that he gets the car and gets to the zoo to meet Lucy! When Ralph gives him the "lesson" on how to attract a woman, does Bobby shut him up or cut him off? No, he sits and listens so that he can get the car and get to the zoo to meet Lucy! The driving force of the whole scene for Bobby is to get the car and get to the zoo to be with Lucy.

One other thing I want to share with you. Because we do not have the whole play, we don't know how the date with Lucy came about. So you get to make some decisions about it and there is one choice that will be very helpful.

How long do you imagine Bobby knew that he was actually going on this date, that is was really going to happen? Here's a hint.

Whenever possible, it is powerful to set things up so that they **"just happened"** or you **"just found out"**.

I would say that a great choice is to decide that Bobby "just found out" that the date had been confirmed. Maybe he just got a text from Lucy while he was in his bedroom and she said that she is on her way to the zoo and she can't wait to see him there. Do you see how this intensifies the urgency for Bobby? He just found out, he's on top of the world and he's got to take action! Take action when? **Right now!**

Bonus Monologue!

You may be intrigued by the whole ripe banana thing with Bobby and Lucy. Why in the world would Lucy want ripe bananas? Here's a really fun monologue I wrote with the character Lucy. This monologue appears in my book of 50 original monologues, [Winning Your Acting Auditions](#)

Here's the monologue:

Lucy: I am upset because I have asked you nicely to get some bananas because as you know I come home from school starving and I crave a good, ripe banana and you don't seem to notice when we run out and you can't seem to remember that I have asked you to just buy some either way so that they have time to ripen. I mean I have stopped eating ants, snails, most flowers, roots, shoots, stems, grubs... but I will not go without my bananas. Look, my counselor tells me that I have adjusted better than anyone thought possible and I have accepted you as my friend and I am calling you "mom" as you requested, I learned to speak your language, I am wearing clothes now and I really think I am over the trauma of being snatched from my family and then dumped into your family without my say-so. I was happy, can you understand what I am saying, I was very happy with the gorillas and I didn't need any of this, not the car you were nice enough to buy me, not the iPad, not the extra soft down pillows, none of it! So just get me bananas. OK?

Scene 3. Brenda and Kirk



Brenda and Kirk (Brenda enters. Kirk at table working on jigsaw puzzle.)

Brenda: I am so beat.

Kirk: Hi Honey.

B: Hi.

K: Good day?

B: My feet are killing me. I knew these shoes were too tight, too late to take'm back now. Guess I'll take'm to be stretched.

K: Good idea.

B: Made one sale, stood there for seven and a half hours, one sale. Mandy takes me in her office tells me I'm not smiling enough's the issue.

K: Uh huh.

B: Said she wants me to smile more.

K: Might just be the ticket.

B: Yeah, so what'd you do?

K: When?

B: Today. All day. What'd you do with yourself?

K: Been working all day.

B: Working.

K: Hardly ate been so excited 'bout completing the landscape set and this one's real tricky.

B: Yeah, that's tough.

K: Oh yeah, and got real nervous, thought I was missing a straight edge, found it under the rug of all places.

B: That's real tough Kirk. Did you cook that lamb like I asked?

K: The what?

B: The lamb. I left a note, the lamb on the top shelf with the eat by today date.

K: Huh?

B: The ground lamb Kirk. Did you cook it for me, for our dinner.

K: Oh the lamb. No honey, like I said, under a lot of pressure here, this one's real tricky.

B: I'm hungry Kirk, been on my feet all day, trying to smile, trying not to pay any attention to my throbbing feet.

K: Only got a couple'a hundred pieces left, let me knock this out Bren, I'll cook that lamb.

B: Just forget about it.

K: No, no, I'll do it, just let me knock this out.

B: Forget it I said.

K: There's an open can of tuna in the fridge and some of those beans from last night.

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B: (Goes to table and sweeps the puzzle to the floor in one big swoop.) Don't want no tuna Kirk.

K: What the hell!

B: Don't want no leftover baked beans.

K: I was almost done I told you.

B: Don't want to stand on my feet no more Kirk, don't want to smile, or bandage blisters or come home every day to you sitting here doing these stupid puzzles'a yours.

K: You said you liked my puzzles.

B: When Kirk? When? When we were dating? When we were in high school?

K: No, no, since then, you told me since then.

B: Then you got some kind'a hearing problem 'cause I am tired Kirk, I am so tired'a coming home to this mess, no dinner cooked, your eyes all glazed over 'cause you been sitting here playing with these stupid puzzles all day.

K: I'm not playing. I'm not playing.

B: What do you call it.

K: Where you going.

B: None of your business.

K: Bren, where you going.

B: None of your business. (exits)

Brenda and Kirk: Scene Notes

The Relationship: Husband and Wife.

Before any work begins on this scene, here is the most important question both actors must answer and I can tell you right now that there is only one answer that will help the two actors fulfill the needs of the scene. The question is:

Do these two people love each other, care for each other and want this marriage to work out?

The only answer that will help both actors is a very big "Yes! If the answer wasn't yes, there would be no scene. Do you see that?

Let's talk about Brenda.

What kind of day is Brenda coming home from? A terrible, exhausting and stressful day:

"My feet are killing me. I knew these shoes were too tight, too late to take'm back now. Guess I'll take'm to be stretched."

"Made one sale, stood there for seven and a half hours, one sale. Mandy takes me in her office tells me I'm not smiling enough's the issue."

And what is going on in her marriage? She is the one who is out in the world working, supporting her and Kirk financially and coming home to him playing with his puzzles:

"Don't want to stand on my feet no more Kirk, don't want to smile, or bandage blisters or come home every day to you sitting here doing these stupid puzzles'a yours."

"...I am tired Kirk, I am so tired'a coming home to this mess, no dinner cooked, your eyes all glazed over 'cause you been sitting here playing with these stupid puzzles all day."

What do you imagine Brenda is praying she will come home to today? What do you think she is hoping she will see when she walks through that door?

Brenda is praying that when she walks through that door, she will see Kirk cooking dinner, she will smell the food in the oven, she prays that Kirk will see her walk in to the apartment and that he will come to her and give her a loving hug and kiss and with great attentiveness, he will ask her about her day and he will take her to the sofa, sit her down, take her shoes off and rub her aching feet.

Brenda prays that Kirk will tell her that he put his puzzles away for good and that he looked for a job and she will notice the newspaper on the kitchen table open to the job ads. She imagines he will try to go back to the cooking but she will hold him tight and he will whisper in her ear how much he loves her and appreciates her for taking care of them and he will promise to do better, to give up his foolish puzzle games and he will be the man she hoped he would become.

But that's not what she gets is it?

No it's not and this is heartbreaking for her.

Two more items...

Do you think that when Brenda leaves at the end of the scene it is a totally unexpected, impulsive action? I would suggest that no, it is not. I would suggest that she has been thinking about this for a while.

Important fact! In every script, we are meeting the characters not on **"just any day"** we are meeting them on the **"most special day!"**

So in this scene, how might this be the **"most special day"** for Brenda. Here's one idea, try it on for size. Before this scene begins, Brenda knows that tonight is the night she makes the decision to stay or to leave. She hopes it will be to stay!

One more thing. What might Brenda have **"just found out"** that would raise the stakes in this scene for her and make it even more urgent that Kirk become the kind of man she can stay with for life? What if she has not shared the news with Kirk and she is waiting to see what happens tonight before she utters a word about it! I just gave you some hints, see what you come up with.

Let's talk about Kirk.

If we look from the outside-in, we know that Kirk has an obsession with the puzzles, they are an addiction and like a drug addiction, the puzzles have become more important than his relationship with his wife, more important than taking on the responsibilities of being a good partner and grown up man and more important than his own well being.

Again, Brenda makes all of this very clear:

"Don't want to stand on my feet no more Kirk, don't want to smile, or bandage blisters or come home every day to you sitting here doing these stupid puzzles'a yours."

"I am so tired'a coming home to this mess, no dinner cooked, your eyes all glazed over 'cause you been sitting here playing with these stupid puzzles all day."

Like all addicts, Kirk justifies his behavior and makes excuses:

"Under a lot of pressure here, this one's real tricky."

"Let me knock this out Bren, I'll cook that lamb."

"You said you liked my puzzles."

"I'm not playing. I'm not playing."

But when we look at it from the inside-out, from Kirk's point of view, it's a different story. He believes what he is doing is important, especially finishing the puzzle he working on tonight:

"Hardly ate been so excited 'bout completing the landscape set and this one's real tricky."

"Oh yeah, and got real nervous, thought I was missing a straight edge, found it under the rug of all places."

And he fully intends to take care of Brenda as soon as he can get this very important puzzle completed:

"Only got a couple'a hundred pieces left, let me knock this out Bren, I'll cook that lamb."

"No, no, I'll do it, just let me knock this out."

So for the actor playing Kirk, you must have an activity, the puzzle, and you must make it crucial, essential and urgent. Get it completed! Then you can take care of your wife who you love with all of your heart and all of your soul!

Also...

Does Kirk believe that he will cook the dinner as soon as he finishes the puzzle? Yes, he does.

Does Kirk believe that if Brenda only understood how important this particular puzzle was she would give him the time to do it and then they would enjoy a nice dinner together. Yes, he does.

Does Kirk believe that if he can just get this most important puzzle completed, the last in the landscape series, then he will have all the time in the world to get a job and do everything he knows deep down Brenda hopes he will do? Yes, he does.

Scene 4. Cassie and Lou



(Lou sits at table, reads a black journal. Cassie sits down.)

Cassie. Do me a favor, Dad, I know you are not going to like me asking this, but I need you to throw out all the almond cookies, the lemon cake, the hershey bars, that frozen cheese cake...

Lou. Izzy hasn't worked in six months.

Cassie. Dad.

Lou. No, wait, when did she write these, I don't know these...Izzy hasn't worked in six months. So he calls his agent who says, "Izzy! there's no call for ventriloquists, but there's plenty of work for psychics right now."

Cassie. I don't want to hear it.

Lou. So Izzy hangs a psychic sign outside his house and within an hour, a woman knocks on the door and says, "I want to talk to my deceased Arnie. How much will it cost me?" Izzy tells her, "If you talk to him, \$50. If he talks back to you, that's \$70. But if you talk to each other while I'm drinking a glass of water, it's 150. (Cracks him up) This is good, Moishe's eating in a Chinese restaurant and chatting to his Chinese waiter.

Cassie. Dad.

Lou. Moishe tells the Chinese waiter what a wise people the Chinese are. "Yes," says the waiter, "we're wise because our culture is 4,000 years old. But Jewish people are also very wise, are they not?" Moishe says, "Yes, we are. Our culture is 5,000 years old." The waiter says, "That can't be true, where did your people eat for a thousand years?"

Cassie. Dad! You throw all that crap out while I am at school, you hear me? Throw it all out because I am tired, I am very tired of watching you eat three servings of dessert after dinner every night. Why can't you listen to what they told you?

Lou. Listen, Moishe is talking to his psychiatrist. "I had a weird dream last night, I saw my mother but then I noticed she had your face and I woke up screaming. I found this so upsetting that I couldn't get back to sleep. I just stayed there thinking about it until 7am. Then, I got up, made myself a slice of toast and some coffee and came straight here. Can you please explain the meaning of my dream?" The psychiatrist keeps silent for a long time and then says, "One slice of toast and coffee? You call that a breakfast?"

Cassie. And you make me feel like if I don't eat that junk with you, I'm am letting you down. I don't even enjoy the taste, I don't like the taste of any of it but I have this moment of anticipation right before I shove it all in my mouth that feels like I really, really want it and that somehow we are enjoying daddy daughter special time after the nightmare we've been through. What hit me in the head like a hammer dad, what I realized just now standing on the scale in there looking at my exploding waist line in the mirror, is that the truth is it is only in the moment before I eat all that crap that I am having fun with you but then I put it in my mouth and I derive no pleasure whatsoever. Do you? I'm asking. Do you?

Lou. What honey?

Cassie. Derive pleasure from it?

Lou. Tonight, I'll stop at Gristedes.

Cassie. Did anything I say get through?

Lou. Yeah, sure, we're outta everything, I'll shop on the way home from work.

Cassie. What's that got to do with it.

Lou. I understand. I do. Here, let's do a list. (He writes on his pad.) Chicken breast, ground turkey, one pack or two?

Cassie. Two, check the dates.

Lou. Frozen vegetables, grapefruits and oranges...

Cassie. Grapefruits?

Lou. A half a day. Just half.

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Cassie. Are you nuts?

Lou. Your yogurts, I'll get some sandwich meats, rye bread, peanuts, the dry roasted ones, the hard rolls you like, muenster, jarlsburg, some milk...

Cassie. (Takes pad and writes) Get the non-fat.

Lou. Oy vey.

Cassie. You didn't give it long enough, you can get used to it.

Lou. It's like cardboard.

Cassie. You can get used to it over time, just takes time Dad. Oh man, I'm late. (gets backpack. keys. etc.)

Lou. I'll buy both, I can't eat cardboard.

Cassie. What'd the doctors tell you?

Lou. Yeah, I know.

Cassie. I can't keep being the nurse for you.

Lou. It should'a been your mom.

Cassie. Don't do that! Lou. It should'a been her, not you.

Cassie. Don't do that! You're making me sick, Dad! I don't wanna be the food police anymore, I keep counting your pills each day to make sure you took them, it's not even six months, you're not out of the woods yet. I leave this on the counter but it's like talking to the wall, (reads) eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, eat whole-grain breads, cereals, grains, drink low-fat milk, eat low-fat dairy products, low fat dad, low fat! Avoid grapefruit! Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice due to its effect on immunosuppression medications. Due to its effect on immunosuppression medications, you listening? (Get's the pill bottle from counter and puts it on the table in front of him.) Immunosuppression medications, (Crosses grapefruit off the list.) it's not six months, no grapefruit! (exits.)

Cassie and Lou: Scene Notes

To begin, I am giving you another basic and powerful way of looking at every character you will ever play. Look at this simple definition of a character:

In dramatic literature, a character is a person with a problem.

Isn't that simple?

Every play and every screenplay is a story about people who have a big problem. The script is the story of the characters struggling to solve their problem. You may have heard that drama is based on conflict, yes, this is absolutely true. The problem, and the attempts made by the characters to solve it, creates conflict. Sometimes the conflict is internal (an inner battle of the mind, old hardened attitudes, self critical thinking, etc.) and sometimes it is external (other characters who make solving the problem even harder).

Because of the problem and the conflict, the character suffers. A great way to examine the character as you approach playing the part is to define their suffering. When you do, you will start to get a real handle on their problem which will be the beginnings of overcoming it.

By the way, just to be very clear, when I say that drama is based on conflict, I want you to know that this includes comedy. The conflict and the problems for the characters in comedies are no less intense than in dramas. Go back and read *The Odd Couple* by Neil Simon, one of the funniest and most successful comedies of all time. It's a play where the characters are dealing with very big problems and a lot of suffering.

On to the scene notes...

The Relationship: Father and Daughter.

I don't like writing scenes with a bunch of exposition. As you have discovered from the previous scenes, I like you having the opportunity to make choices based on the information that is given. With this scene however, there are two facts that are built into the scene but not spelled out that I want to share with you, they will help you act the scene.

First, at the beginning of the scene, Lou is reading a journal of jokes. He says:

"No, wait, when did she write these, I don't know these..."

One year before this scene begins, Lou's wife, Cassie's mom, died. She worked as a writer for a Jewish comedian. Lou just found a box of her journals that were packed away in the garage.

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The fact that the mom is no longer alive is reflected in Lou's line, *"It should'a been your mom,"* when Cassie tells him she can't keep being the nurse for him.

The other thing I want you to know has to do with the immunosuppression medications. Six months before the scene begins, Lou had a heart transplant.

Let's talk about Lou.

Lou begins with an activity. It has tremendous importance to him. He is discovering for the first time, jokes written by his wife before she died and which he had no idea existed:

"No, wait, when did she write these, I don't know these..."

To play Lou, this activity will be the key to how you must begin the scene. You have "just found" the journals. It's "as if" you are spending time with the precious love of your life who is gone, a heartbreaking, emotionally rich moment. It also has the great gift of the jokes which are very funny and warm Lou's heart.

We also know that Lou is unable to take in what Cassie is sharing with him about her gaining weight and not finding pleasure in eating all the junk foods. She says:

"Did anything I say get through?"

We also know that Lou is not being rigorous about following his health regimen. Cassie says:

"I am very tired of watching you eat three servings of dessert after dinner every night. Why can't you listen to what they told you?"

"I leave this on the counter but it's like talking to the wall, (reads) eat five servings of fruits and vegetables each day, eat whole-grain breads, cereals, grains, drink low-fat milk, eat low-fat dairy products, low fat dad, low fat! Avoid grapefruit! Avoid grapefruit and grapefruit juice due to its effect on immunosuppression medications."

Actors playing Lou - fight to be better for Cassie, make her believe you will try harder to be a good patient, try harder to heal from the surgery, try harder to eat what's good for you, try harder to take the pressure off of her, try harder to be the dad she really needs!

Let's talk about Cassie:

Where does Cassie come from both literally and emotionally to begin the scene?

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Cassie has just weighed herself and she is angry and distraught by her expanding waist line and the realization that using food to try and have a relationship with her dad is making her sick inside:

"...you make me feel like if I don't eat that junk with you, I'm am letting you down. I don't even enjoy the taste, I don't like the taste of any of it but I have this moment of anticipation right before I shove it all in my mouth that feels like I really, really want it and that somehow we are enjoying daddy daughter special time..."

"What hit me in the head like a hammer dad, what I realized just now standing on the scale in there, looking at my exploding waist line in the mirror, is that the truth is it is only in the moment before I eat all that crap that I am having fun with you but then I put it in my mouth and I derive no pleasure whatsoever."

Cassie is also physically and emotionally exhausted from the effort to keep her dad from dying:

"I can't keep being the nurse for you."

"You're making me sick, Dad! I don't wanna be the food police anymore, I keep counting your pills each day to make sure you took them, it's not even six months, you're not out of the woods yet."

This is not complicated for Cassie, so do not complicate it. She just had one of those "straw that broke the camels back" kind of moments...

Actresses playing Cassie - this is a moment that calls for extraordinary action!

Make dad open his eyes, wake him up to the truth of what is happening here, make him do what he needs to do to take care of himself, make him get rid of all the foods that are poison to both him and to you, fight to have a real relationship with him and don't let your daddy die!

Two more items for all of you playing Cassie...

Where is Cassie going? We know she is going to school, yes? She says:

"Dad! You throw all that crap out while I am at school, you hear me?"

First I want you to add "urgency" to the scene. Urgency is a great acting element to work with when it is appropriate and it will help you in this scene. How do you add urgency here? You must give yourself a specific reason that makes it very important that you get to school at a specific time and it must be pressing!

Again, the scene doesn't give this information to you so you get to invent something that would make sense to the needs of the scene.

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For example, what if you (Cassie) had a crush on a boy and the two of you are meeting at 7am, before school begins, to go over the math notes from class. Not only does this add to how upset you are about what just happened in the bathroom mirror and on the scale, it also makes it imperative that you get your dad to listen to you before you rush out of here.

The second thing I want you to add to the scene for yourself are some specific activities. What might you be doing to get ready to go to school today?

Are you finishing putting on some makeup? Are you packing a lunch? Are you looking for your car keys and wallet?

Activities are wonderful and they will make the scene really come to life! They help you make a real "world" that you live in and when you make them very specific, they tell a story to the audience that is not in the words and the audience has an inner experience that they are watching a real person really living in a real world. How cool is that!



Scene 5. Harold and Shirley



H: He brought it on himself.

S: What do I say to Mrs. Kaplan, Harold?

(Harold and Shirley enter.)

Harold: I'm taking down the menu, my mind's made up I said.

Shirley: Please Harold.

H: I'm taking it down.

S: He apologized, he was sorry.

H: That don't mean nothin' to me.

S: He won't make it without the lunches, Harold.

H: That don't mean nothin' to me.

S: He was very sorry.

H: He should'a thought'a that.

S: He apologized.

H: These are the consequences.

S: Please Harold, Mrs. Kaplan is in my knitting club and all.

H: You don't go pouring soda on me.

S: You were yelling in his face.

H: You don't pour no cream soda down my shirt. I'm taking down the menu, I'm going with Bagelmania, they been beggin' me for the lunches, beggin' me for the business.

S: You are so stubborn.

H: He brought it on himself, capish?

S: But Mrs. Kaplan Harold, what do I...

H: Zip it Shirley, zip it! Kaplan's out, Bagelmania's in, conversation over, conversation is over.

S: You are so stubborn.

H: Was that thousand island rancid or what?

S: Harold, I told you, I couldn't...

H: It was sour, it was rancid...

S: I couldn't tell because I...

H: You took a bite, it was rancid. Idiot flies in corned beef, ruins it with rancid thousand island.

S: So you send it back.

H: I bit into it all ready.

S: You send it back, order something else.

H: I bit into it, how do I send that back?

S: You send it back Harold, you don't scream at the waitress, she's not to blame.

H: I didn't scream.

S: You screamed across the dining room, I was humiliated.

H: I didn't scream, I have a naturally loud voice.

S: You screamed Harold, you screamed at the waitress, you spit the food on your plate and you made her look at it.

H: What, I should swallow rancid thousand island?

S: You didn't have to scream at her.

H: I should make myself sick on rancid thousand island?

S: Of course Mr. Kaplan was upset, you don't threaten his employees like that.

H: And don't you ever contradict me again, Shirley.

S: I was humiliated.

H: I say it's rancid, it's rancid.

S: I will never eat out with you again.

H: Do not contradict me, do you hear me?

S: I will never eat out with you again, never!

H: You took a bite, it was rancid.

S: Never again.

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H: Zip it I said, conversation over, now close your mouth and go get ready for bed.

S: You're a big mouth, you're a bully.

H: Conversation over I said, go get ready for bed!

S: Never again, I will never eat out with you again, never!

H: All right stand there, I'm going to bed.

S: Bully!

H: I'm going to bed. (Exits)

S: Bully!



Harold and Shirley: Scene Notes

The Relationship: Husband and Wife.

Here's a fun scene that begins with the two characters coming into the room and there are two lines that they say before they enter. It is important that the actors playing Harold and Shirley have a great improvisation out in the hall as you approach the door. Add this improvisation to the scene after you have it on its feet so that you have a strong connection to the circumstances and how upset you both are because of what just happened at the restaurant.

I am going to talk about the event at the restaurant from each character's point of view.

Let's begin with Harold.

From Harold's point of view, he was taking his wife out for a nice meal at Kaplan's Deli Restaurant. He ordered a Reuben sandwich and the thousand island dressing was rancid. It was so bad he spit it out. He tried to tell the waitress but she didn't hear him. When he got her attention, she came over to the table and he explained that the sandwich was no good. She couldn't care less and she called Kaplan, the owner, to come over. Kaplan came to the table and he was so defensive that he poured Harold's cream soda all over Harold's shirt. Harold has decided that because of Kaplan's outrageous behavior he will take down the menu that he has posted on the employee bulletin board at his company and put up the menu from the Bagel Mania restaurant instead. He has been sending a lot of lunch business to Kaplan and now he's going to give it all to Bagel Mania and it is just too bad for Kaplan!

Now let's look at Shirley.

Shirley was going out to Kaplan's Deli Restaurant for a nice meal with Harold. Harold ordered the Reuben sandwich and when he bit into it, he gagged on it, spit it out on his plate and started yelling out that the thousand island dressing was no good. He got Shirley to take a bite but she couldn't really tell if it was bad which made Harold even more angry. She tried to get Harold to calm down and simply send it back and order something else, but he kept yelling that it was too late for that. Then Harold started waving at the waitress and when she didn't see him, he started to scream across the dining room, "Hey Waitress, get over here! Get over here!" It was humiliating for Shirley! When the waitress came over, Harold stuck the plate right in her face, yelling that the dressing was rancid. He was angry and yelling at her and he kept spitting little bits of sandwich onto his plate and sticking it in her face. It was disgusting, and the waitress was terrified and she ran to the kitchen. Then Kaplan came out and told Harold that he better calm down and that he better apologize to the waitress but Harold only got more enraged. That's when Kaplan picked up Harold's cream soda and spilled it on Harold, getting his shirt soaking wet. Harold screamed at Kaplan saying that he was done sending him any business and he grabbed Shirley and yanked her out of the restaurant to go home. On the way to the car, Kaplan came running after them and he tried to apologize to Harold for losing his temper and spilling soda on him, but Harold yelled back that it was too late for that.

Harold continued...

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From Harold's point of view, he has been badly betrayed. First by Kaplan for serving him rancid food. What kind of thanks is that for all the business Harold has been sending to Kaplan. You see? It's much more than just getting a bad sandwich to Harold. He and Shirley both know that Kaplan's restaurant is not doing so well and Kaplan should be extra appreciative that Harold is doing so much to keep Kaplan's doors open!

The other major betrayal that just happened to Harold is that Shirley didn't agree with him. This is a very big source of Harold's rage, and two times he tells her:

"...don't you ever contradict me again, Shirley."

Of course, to Harold, all of his actions were justified and certainly, nothing that happened was his fault, and many of his lines relate to that:

"He should'a thought'a that."

"You don't go pouring soda on me."

"These are the consequences."

"He brought it on himself."

"I bit into it, how do I send that back?"

"I didn't scream, I have a naturally loud voice."

"I should make myself sick on rancid thousand island?"

Actors... your job is to get Shirley to come to her senses, admit that you are right and take your side and if she doesn't well it's just too bad because your mind is made up, Bagel Mania gets your business!

One more thing for you actors playing Harold...

The scene does not tell us what kind of company Harold has, so make a choice. This will have an influence in some activities you might invent for the scene.

Does Harold own a shoe factory? A used car dealership? Let your imagination find something really fun!

Shirley Continued...

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Besides the humiliation of what just happened at the restaurant, what is the big problem for Shirley? It is not complicated. The problem is that she is friends with Mrs. Kaplan, they are in the knitting club together. Shirley knows that the restaurant is not doing well, it's hanging on by a thread, and it would be terrible if Harold took an action that would put the Kaplan's out of business! Everything Shirley does, all of her reasoning with Harold, is to get him to change his mind about ending the lunch arrangement with his employees and Mr. Kaplan:

"He apologized, he was sorry."

"He won't make it without the lunches, Harold."

"He was very sorry."

"Please Harold, Mrs. Kaplan is in my knitting club and all."

"What do I say to Mrs. Kaplan, Harold?"

"I will never eat out with you again, never!"

So for you actresses playing Shirley, you don't want an argument, you don't want to fight. Simply, you must do everything in your power to get Harold to change his mind and keep the Kaplan's in business!

Scene 6. Ocean and Mr. Franklin



(Ocean sits at desk with application forms and pen. Mr. Franklin enters, blows his nose into a tissue.)

Ocean: You are a kind man.

Mr. Franklin: Hold on there lady.

O: You are kind, inside you are, deep down.

Mr. Franklin: Lady, like I told you, I have a line of people waiting out there, did you fill out the three forms completely?

O: Something happened, something has upset you.

Mr. F: Look, did you fill out the forms?

O: I know your hostility is not towards me, I know it's not personal and I forgive you.

Mr. F: I'll tell you one last time, I can't find you a job unless you fill out the forms. I need to know your actual name, I need to know...

O: Ocean.

Mr. F: No, as I explained, I need to have your actual name, the one that was given to you at birth.

O: Ocean, it's my name given to me when I was reborn, that's when I was truly born, I'm three years old.

Mr. F: I'm not going over all this again, you want a job you have to...

O: I do, of course I do.

Mr. F: You want a job, you fill out the forms with your actual name, your address, your social security number, your previous five year work history and your skills.

O: I am a loving person.

Mr. F: Skills, skills, work history and your skills.

O: I'm a very loving person.

Mr. F: That doesn't land you a paying job.

O: Every person needs to work, Mr. Franklin, to pay back, to make a difference.

Mr. F: Then fill out the damn forms lady.

O: I forgive you.

Mr. F: You forgive me.

O: Yes, you are a very unhappy person, I understand.

Mr. F: You understand.

O: Yes, you are unhappy and lonely. you don't enjoy your life, you wonder what the point really is, why go on, what it's all really all about.

Mr. F: Look you nut, you get up now, take your bag and you get out of here, ok?

O: I need a job.

Mr. F: Every damn nut job, you go get yourself a newspaper and look in the want ads.

O: It's not personal. you're not angry at me.

Mr. F: You hear me, get...

O: You're lonely and sad, you are so very sad.

Mr. F: Get out I said.

O: If you only knew, he has his loving arms around you right this very minute, just holding you and forgiving you and loving you.

Mr. F: Don't.

O: Holding you and loving you like this.

Mr. F: Don't I said.

O: Holding you like this.

Mr. F: Quit it.

O: Forgiving you and loving you.

Mr. F: I can't.

O: His loving arms just holding you like this, loving you, loving you.

Mr. F: Oh God.

O: His sweet loving arms caressing you and loving you.

Mr. F: I am so lonely.

O: Loving you, he's loving you...

Mr. F: I am sad, I am so sad.

O: I love you, I forgive you I am three years old, I am love, I am ocean and I love you, I forgive you.

Mr. F: Oh my God, I am so lonely. Oh my God.

Ocean and Mr. Franklin: Scene Notes

The Relationship: Employment Agency Worker and Woman Applying for a Job.

Let's begin with Ocean.

What a wonderful character! She was inspired by an encounter I had on the phone a few summers ago with a yoga teacher who was also a spiritual healer. My wife and I were traveling and I was looking for a good yoga class and I found a nearby studio online. When I called to find out if there was a class running that day, I had an extraordinary conversation with this woman who was selling "miracle spiritual" oils and a ten step spiritual do-over program for many, many thousands of dollars. Somehow, out of that conversation, the character "Ocean" emerged.

There is a very simple key to this scene when you play Ocean. She needs a job! We do not know why she needs a job, but you must make this fact crucial to you. Everything she does in the scene is for that singular purpose, do not leave this office until you are sure this guy is going to get you a job! Do not sentimentalize this scene and do not play it for the laughs - you mustn't! The comedy will take care of itself if you are 100% fully invested in getting a job! Am I clear?

So that is your first mission, figure out why Ocean is here at the employment agency and why she must land a job today - not any day - why it must be today! Use your actor's imagination and have fun.

Something else you must consider... Why doesn't Ocean fill out the application forms completely for Mr. Franklin? She probably doesn't have much of a work history to show. So at the beginning of the scene, before Mr. Franklin comes in, do your activity, fill out the forms as best as you can without giving away that you really have no experience doing much of anything.

And believe me, Ocean is not stupid, so to make up for a lack of real work skills, you say:

"I am a loving person."

"I'm a very loving person."

One more thing. Ocean is a truly sensitive person, it is a beautiful quality that she has and she picks up on the deep pain that Mr. Franklin is experiencing:

"Yes, you are a very unhappy person, I understand."

"Yes, you are unhappy and lonely. you don't enjoy your life, you wonder what the point really is, why go on, what it's all really all about."

"You're lonely and sad. you are so very sad."

So take care of Mr. Franklin, do it with utter sincerity, compassion and love. And... Get that job!

Now to Mr. Franklin.

Where does the scene begin for Mr. Franklin? It actually begins back when Ocean first comes into his office. We don't get to see that part of the scene but we know from Franklin's lines that he was already in his office with Ocean before we join them in this scene:

"Lady, like I told you, I have a line of people waiting out there, did you fill out the three forms completely?"

"I'll tell you one last time..."

"No, as I explained, I need to have your actual name..."

The tremendous frustration Mr. Franklin has with Ocean is quite obvious, she is not doing any of the very simple things he is asking her to do and she is totally avoiding filling out the forms in the correct manner. She is making his life very unpleasant. All of this is clear in the scene. But there is something else going on with Mr. Franklin that exacerbates his frustration with her and this is the key to playing this role. Think about it this way...

Franklin was in his office with this woman, Ocean, and he was trying to get her to fill out the application forms. Then, for some reason the scene does not tell us, he left the room. Why? Why did he leave, where did he go in the middle of dealing with a new applicant?

There is a strong hint in the scene and it comes from Ocean. Here's her line when Franklin comes back into the office:

"Something happened, something has upset you."

What Ocean just told us is that Franklin was fine when he was in the office before he went out, but when he comes back he has a problem. Do you have any idea what the problem is? When he leaves in the middle of their interview, what might have happened out there?

Again, the scene does not tell us what happened to Franklin, so you get to invent it. How do you go about this?

I would say that the best way to start to imagine what might have happened to Franklin when he leaves the office is to connect it to what gets expressed by Franklin later in the scene. Here's what he ultimately admits:

"I am so lonely."

"I am sad, I am so sad."

"Oh my God, I am so lonely. Oh my God."

So what do you imagine happened when he left the office? Here's one example. You don't have to use this, but it might spark your fantasy life as you choose what you want to work with.

Imagine this...

Franklin is going through a nasty divorce. He didn't want to get divorced and he didn't want to lose his three children but that's what has happened. He was in his office with Ocean and he was asked to come to the front desk by Anna, the receptionist, who wanted to give Franklin an envelope that was just delivered for him before she goes to lunch. Franklin goes to Anna, she hands him the envelope which is from his ex-wife and he walks away shaking inside. In the hallway, by himself, he rips open the envelope to find the keys to the house. This means that his ex-wife and the kids are all moved out and have left for another state to live with her new boyfriend. Franklin puts the keys in his pocket, tears up the envelope and starts to sob. He pulls himself together and goes back into his office to deal with Ocean.

Now for the actor playing Franklin, to take on that kind of circumstance with great personal meaning and reality, suddenly the whole end of the scene becomes possible. When Ocean keeps holding you and supporting you and loving you, you will be able to simply reconnect with the upset of losing your beloved family and now you will not be pretending to be lonely and sad, **YOU WILL ACTUALLY BE LONELY AND SAD**. That's exciting. Now it is not only a funny moment it is a heartbreaking moment that will make us laugh and move us at the very same time!

One other fact. If you are playing Franklin, when you come back to the office, you must give Ocean a reason to say her line:

"Something happened, something has upset you."

As Franklin, you must be in the midst of a deeply disturbing situation when you enter the room. Do you want Ocean to see that you are upset? Of course not. But it is up to you to make her line necessary for her to say. As the actor playing this part, it is your job! And if you are actually living it, she will "get it" no matter how hard you try to hide it. If you are not actually experiencing the upset of what happened outside the office, then your acting partner has no choice but to say her line without a real reason to say it. This would be quite unfortunate for all involved, including the audience who, at best, will pretend to enjoy your performance rather than actually being interested and involved.

Scene 7. Peterson and Franklin



(a knock on the door)

Petersen: Come in Franklin, sit down, give me a minute... (finishes up some notes) All right now. Let me get right to the point. I have in my hands an official complaint, written up this morning, a complaint about you Franklin.

Franklin: A complaint?

P: Yes, an official complaint against you and it's not pretty.

F: I don't understand.

P: Franklin, this is a complaint against you, about your lack of sensitivity, your refusal to find appropriate work for a client and...

F: Lack of sensitivity? You're kidding me right?

P: This is no joke.

F: This is outrageous.

P: Look, I was able to place her in a hostess position at the Red Lobster over on the Skyway, she has agreed not to make any further complaints over at headquarters.

F: She?

P: She was quite upset, crying, sobbing, but as I said, she has agreed not to make any further complaints.

F: She, she, who are you talking about, Mona?

P: Her name is Louise, Louise Shiner.

F: (looks through his book) Shiner? Shiner... I don't remember... No, no, I don't see a Shiner from last week...

P: I have her intake form right here.

F: May I see that? Oh my god...

P: This was on Friday.

F: Oh my god, that Ocean, right here Mona, right here, it's that Ocean wacko.

P: Yes, she told me her nickname is Ocean.

F: She's a nut job, she wouldn't tell me her name.

P: She said you wouldn't give her time to fill out the application.

F: Come on Mona, come on now, it's a bunch of crap.

P: Whatever it is, I won't have it Fred, I can't afford to have these kinds of complaints, you've been a wreck since the divorce, you're late, you're distracted, Marvin said you screamed at him for spilling his coffee, you're out of control Fred.

F: Mona, I'm telling you this Ocean, it's all a bunch of crap.

P: Look at you, your hands are shaking.

F: I do my job, I come in here and I do my job.

P: Calm down, calm down. Give me your hands.

F: Mona, I do my job...

P: Shhhh, just give me your hands. Just hold my hands. That's it, that's it. Shhhh...

F: It's a bunch of lies...

P: I know, I know, it's all going to be just fine. Such strong hands, warm hands, you feel that?

F: Yes, yes, but...

P: You feel that? Such strong hands Fred, such soft skin...

F: Mona, don't, I can't, I'm not...

P: Shhhh... It's going to be just fine. You're so lonely Fred, you're so alone and lonely, I know, I know, I'm lonely too, such strong hands...

F: Mona, I can't. don't, I have to...

P: Kiss me Fred, just kiss me...

F: I can't...

P: Kiss me I said...

F: Stop it, cut it out, cut it out Mona, just stop, just stop

P: All right. All right. Get the hell out of here, get out, go on, get out of here...

F: I'm sorry, I didn't mean to...

P: Get out I said!

F: I didn't mean to, I just can't, I can't...

P: Go on, get out of here, you hear me, get out of here, go on I said, get out!

Peterson and Franklin: Scene Notes

The Relationship: Employment Agency Worker and His Boss.

As you have realized by now, this scene is a follow up to the Ocean and Mr. Franklin scene. I was so captivated by this character Ocean as she evolved in my imagination that I actually wrote three scenes about her although she only appears in the Ocean and Mr. Franklin scene. I have included two of the scenes here in this book.

Now that you have read this scene, you have a much greater understanding of Ocean. She's a survivor! As I told you in the previous scene notes, her objective was to get a job no matter what.

When the scene with Mr. Franklin and Ocean concluded, it appeared that Ocean would get what she was after but now we know that for some reason, things did not work out and she had to take further action. Ocean went to Franklin's boss, Mona Peterson, and filed a complaint against Franklin. To keep this whole mess from escalating, Mona got Ocean the job she wanted:

"Look, I was able to place her in a hostess position at the Red Lobster over on the Skyway, she has agreed not to make any further complaints over at headquarters."

You have also discovered important information about Franklin in this scene. In my scene notes for the Ocean and Mr. Franklin scene, I suggested one way to personalize the terrible emotional condition Franklin is in was to imagine that he was going through an awful divorce and suffering with the reality of losing his family. Now you know that this divorce is indeed what Franklin is going through. Mona says:

"...you've been a wreck since the divorce, you're late, you're distracted, Marvin said you screamed at him for spilling his coffee, you're out of control Fred."

Let's talk about Franklin.

My friends, as you know by now, when we look at the needs of the scene, I like to simplify things. This scene is not complicated. It is emotionally charged with very big stakes for all involved! But it is not complicated. So let's talk about it in the most simple ways we can.

We know that Franklin is in bad shape emotionally. Now he has been called in by his boss, Mona Peterson, to meet with her. When Franklin walks into the room at the beginning of the scene, does he have any idea why he has been called in to see Mona? No, he doesn't. Does he have any idea that there has been a complaint made about him? No, he doesn't. Has he ever heard the name Louise Shiner before? No he hasn't. So, when Franklin walks through that door to begin the scene, he is totally in the dark.

Of course, this brings up an immediate acting challenge which is a basic acting truth for everything you work on. The truth is when you play Franklin, you the actor must not know what is about to happen even though in reality you do know. Do you see? You know and you must not know. This is the way I sum it up as a fundamental acting law:

The actor must not know.

How do you accomplish this do you think? How do you "not know?" How do you make it the "first time" in every performance? Because clearly your job is to have the audience believe that this is the first time you have ever lived these events and this is the first time you have ever spoken these words. So how do you accomplish this?

The truth is, it is very simple.

The way to have everything be the first time, every time, is to give 100% of your attention to the other people you are acting with and to the world around you. If you can do this, each moment as it arrives will come to you unexpected and it will truly be the first time for you. And, because it is the first time for you, the audience will believe it is the first time BECAUSE IT IS! How wonderful! Yet, this is very rare because many actors are anticipating the next moment or pre-planning it or stuck in their heads thinking about it and in these conditions, you will never arrive at living for the very first time.

Back to Franklin...

There is one main key for Franklin in this scene. You are going through the worst moment of your life, you have lost your family and the only thing that could possibly make your life worse would be to lose your job! So what I want you to do if you are playing Franklin is to decide why you must not lose your job today. Yes it would be bad on any day, but why must you keep your job today? Use your imagination based on the circumstances you know about Franklin's life and be specific. This will lead to understanding why the complaint is completely "outrageous" and why you must not allow any kind of romantic or sexual behavior to happen in this room right now. Save your job!

Let's talk about Mona.

There are really only two items we need to understand about Mona. First there is the reality that having a complaint made against someone who works in her department makes her look bad and might lead to series repercussions for her position at the agency. She says:

"Whatever it is, I won't have it Fred, I can't afford to have these kinds of complaints."

So for those of you who are playing Mona, you must first decide why right now would be the very worst time for headquarters to find out there has been a complaint filed against someone in her department.

The other big thing going on for Mona is that she too is alone and lonely and very attracted to Franklin:

"Shhhh, just give me your hands. Just hold my hands. That's it, that's it. Shhhh..."

"...such strong hands, warm hands, you feel that?"

"...It's going to be just fine. You're so lonely Fred, you're so alone and lonely, I know, I know, I'm lonely too, such strong hands..."

"Kiss me Fred, just kiss me..."

Mona's strong feelings for Franklin have probably been brewing in her for quite some time, don't you think? Think about your loneliness, what might Mona's life be like outside of work, what might have just happened in her life that propels her into revealing her feelings to Franklin today and trying to make this relationship happen?

One other thing I'd like you to consider.

Before Franklin enters, do you think Mona knows that she will tell him how she feels, try to hold him and kiss him?

The best choice is that she does not know. She wants it, fantasizes about it, longs for it, but she does not know that she will actually take action on her feelings in this meeting with Franklin today. What a wonderful choice! Then, when it does happen, she gets totally swept away by her need to be with this man who she wants so badly!

To the degree you really want this relationship to happen with Franklin and based on how completely you throw yourself into his arms, it will be to that degree that you will be devastated and humiliated when he turns you down. Then you will have the true need to scream out:

"Go on, get out of here, you hear me, get out of here, go on I said, get out"

Scene 8. Flint and Jake



(Jake rehearses a dance. Flint enters and watches quietly, the music stops)

Jake: Didn't even see you there, you want something, Bro?

Flint: Huh?

J: You want something?

F: Who?

J: Look, man, real busy, what do you want?

F: Who?

J: Who, who, you, you looking for someone?

F: No, just came in.

J: All right, I have to get back to work and this is...

F: No, sorry, I just came in and, I really like that dance.

J: The shows in three weeks, get some tickets 'K? Now, I'm gonna have to ask you to leave.

F: Yeah, ok.

J: Yeah, so, go on, I have this room booked and I have work to do.

F: Yeah, wow Jake.

J: Do I know you?

F: Who me?

J: You, you, do I know you?

F: Who me?

J: You messing with me?

F: Me?

J: All right, get out of here.

F: Jake, Jake, no, no, wait, we, you know, we went to Valley, and you know, like, I was like there at Valley with you, Jake.

J: You went to Valley?

F: With you.

J: Why don't I know you?

F: I was real little, real little, you could hardly see me.

J: Don't remember you.

F: I was real little.

J: Don't remember you 'Bro.

F: No, sure, you did though, you did. You locked me in my locker in ninth, three days, sipped on my apple juice for three days.

J: Yeah?

F: You made me eat 23 hot dogs in tenth, that's ok, that's ok though, I like 'em, hot dogs, I'm skinny, but I eat like a horse...

J: Oh, man, you that kid always followed me?

F: Yeah, Jake.

J: You always right behind my heels?

F: Yeah, Jake.

J: Yeah, that's right, you hid in my back seat had to throw you outta' my car.

F: Yeah, Jake, that's ok, you wasn't going that fast.

J: How'd you know I was here?

F: You got that dance scholarship, in the school paper. I got in too, I got in too, but 'cause-a-my grades though, had good grades though and wanted to be here with you.

J: You still following me.

F: Yeah.

J: Crazy man but I'm busy, aw'right, so go on now, get outta here...

F: Jake, Jake, Jake...

J: Come on man...

F: Jake Jake Jake...

J: Hey, would you calm down.

F: Please, Jake!

J: What do you want, would you calm down?

F: I wanna dance, I wanna dance Jake, wanna dance.

J: What the...!

F: I wanna dance, brought music and all, wanna join the club, wanna be in your dance club Jake, wanna dance with you, wanna dance with you.

J: Would you calm down.

F: Just wanna dance with you, wanna be in dance club, Jake, wanna be in dance club.

J: Man, would you calm down!

F: I'm calm Jake, I'm calm.

J: You scared me there. Bro'!

F: I'm sorry, Jake.

J: Man, you really scared me.

F: I wanna dance, Jake.

J: You dance?

F: Yeah, Jake.

J: You really dance?

F: Yeah, Jake,

J: You brought music?

F: Yeah, Jake.

J: Go on.

F: What.

J: Go on, dance.

F: Who?

J: You, you, go on and dance man.

F: Yeah, Ok , yeah, yeah. Ok, here, here ok Jake, ok... (He plays music and does a break dance)

J: You really the guy I threw outta my car?

F: Yeah, Jake.

J: Whadda-ya-know.

F: Yeah.

J: Whadda-ya-know.

F: Yeah.

J: Ok, you're in.

F: Who?

J: You, you, you're in.

F: Me?

J: You can dance man, you're in, just stay outta my car. Hey, you don't have to cry...

(Flint hugs Jake and runs out)

Flint and Jake: Scene Notes

The Relationship: College Student and his High School Idol Who Goes to the Same School.

Here's is a great scene for two actors who can also dance. It's a really fun scene where you get to incorporate music and choreography in addition to the very intense stakes both characters are in the midst of. You may think it is only Flint who has the big problem but I am going to show you how to set it up so that both actors are under tremendous pressure, which is exactly what you want! If not for the intensity of the conflict, what is the point really. Here's another of my basic "laws" of acting:

The word "casual" has no place in the world of acting.

(So strike casual from your actor's vocabulary!)

Let's talk about Flint first.

The scene takes place in a college dance studio. Flint has chosen to attend this particular college because of one reason, yes? He chose to come here because his high school idol, Jake, chose to attend the school after receiving a dance scholarship:

"You got that dance scholarship, in the school paper. I got in too, I got in too, but 'cause-a-my grades though, had good grades though and wanted to be here with you."

I want to stress this part of the line:

"...and wanted to be here with you."

What kind of relationship did Flint and Jake have in High School? From Flint's point of view, he may not have had all the "best buddy" kind of time with Jake that he would have liked but he did have some moments when Jake gave him some real attention. And, although these events would be a disaster for some people, Flint really appreciated having at least some connection with his hero:

"No, sure, you did though, you did. You locked me in my locker in ninth, three days, sipped on my apple juice for three days."

"You made me eat 23 hot dogs in tenth, that's ok, that's ok though, I like 'em, hot dogs, I'm skinny, but I eat like a horse"

And in this exchange...

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J: Yeah, that's right, you hid in my back seat had to throw you outta' my car.

F: Yeah, Jake, that's ok, you wasn't going that fast.

Now, the two young men are at the same college.

Question... What year of college are they in? I will let you decide. Remember, the longer they have been at school, the longer Flint has been living with his deep longing to be friends with Jake, to be in the dance club and the longer he has been suffering.

Question... What part of the school year do you think this is? The scene doesn't tell us this but it certainly might be a month before the winter break and the holiday dance recital is approaching.

Question... Do you think that Jake and Flint have been in each other's presence before this scene begins? I say, "Oh, yes!" I can imagine Flint following Jake around, sitting behind him in some of their classes and eating at a nearby table in the dining hall. Don't you think this adds to Flint's pain that Jake doesn't recognize him and his deep to be accepted by Jake into the dance club today? And that raises the other essential question...

Question...Why Today? Why does Flint choose today? Why must he tell Jake that he is here at school and why must he fight to get into the dance club today? Remember, your reason must be specific and meaningful to you.

One of my favorite things about this scene is that we discover that Flint is actually a fantastic dancer! It's great to get to work on a scene that has such a joyful outcome for a character who has been in such misery. This is exactly what happens with Flint. So for you actors playing Flint, you must choreograph a truly beautiful dance to perform for Jake! Choose a piece of music you love and when you do the scene, take the time to do the whole dance. Bring in the music on an Ipad or your phone and give the performance of a lifetime. Win your place in the club! Win your chance to work with your hero!

Let's talk about Jake.

We already established that Jake got a dance scholarship to attend the college so he is obviously a really good dancer. That's how the scene begins, Jake is dancing. Why is he dancing? Here are the facts we get from the scene...

Jake is totally absorbed in his dancing and doesn't know that Flint has come in and is watching Jake:

"Didn't even see you there, you want something, Bro?"

When Jake does see Flint, does he know who he is? No, he doesn't:

"Do I know you?"

Is the dance Jake is working on important to him? Yes, it is. He says multiple times that he has to get back to work and does not have time to deal with Flint:

"You want something?"

"Look, man, real busy, what do you want?"

"All right, I have to get back to work and this is..."

"I'm gonna have to ask you to leave."

"I have this room booked and I have work to do."

"Crazy man but I'm busy, aw'right, so go on now, get outta here..."

Why do you think Jake reserved the room and is working on a dance? It must be for the dance recital that is coming up:

"The shows in three weeks, get some tickets 'K?"

And here's where we get to add some pressure on Jake. We must make some decisions that are in alignment with the information we get from the text. Jake doesn't have time for chit-chat, the show is in only three weeks and we know that he is the head of the dance club (because Flint has come to him for permission to join.) My question to you is, what circumstance can you invent that would make the dance Jake is rehearsing the most important dance he will ever perform?

There are many ways you can go with this. Here is one very simple idea. You are invited to use an idea like this or some variation of it or invent one of your own.

What if Jake has been distracted by breaking up with his lover, he has not been living up to his responsibilities with the dance club and he has not been showing up to some of his dance classes. His advisor just told him before he walked into the dance studio that the faculty was going to meet with him the day after the dance recital to tell him if they were going to forgive his recent behavior and permit him to stay in the dance program.

Doesn't a circumstance like this make the dance urgent and crucial? Yes, it does. Now, you actors playing Jake have a strong reason to give one hundred percent of your attention and effort to the practice of the dance at the beginning of the scene!

The other part of the scene, your relationship with Flint, how you treated him in High School, that he followed you to college and is still following you around, is all of some mild interest to you, but nothing is as important right now as the approaching dance recital.

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If you work off of your very nervous and emotionally volatile acting partner playing Flint with a fierce discovery of each moment as it unfolds, you will have all you need! This will simply require that once you decide to really deal with him, you give him your complete attention and permit yourself to be surprised by going where you don't know the scene is taking you. That's the real fun!



Scene 9. Nell and Ernie



Nell: Do you know how to play hopscotch?

Ernie: Don't remember.

n: Me neither. What about simon says?

e: That where you close your eyes and make a wish to the big simon?

n: I have the name in here but don't remember how to play it.

e: Yeah, I got duck duck goose on the brain, how'd that one go?

n: I think you got to run around the chairs until the music stops.

e: You're thinking of red light green light I think. How old are you anyway?

n: Think i just had a birthday, not sure 'cause no one served any cake.

e: I saw you eating a cookie.

n: Yeah, someone must a dropped it by the dock. When's your birthday?

e: Can't remember.

n: Did you hold on to your name?

e: No, they gave me two two ten four a.

n: Don't that bother you none?

e: Naaaah, it's ok really, no one uses it anymore anyway.

n: I want mine back, I do, I want it back really. Couldn't stop thinking about it last night, cried for a while, just want it back.

e: You cried?

n: For a while.

e: How long?

n: I don't know, could a been all night, didn't sleep, just crying and crying.

e: You wanna cry now?

n: I guess I do.

e: Can I watch?

n: Sure.

e: Well, go ahead.

n: I don't know, can't seem to do it with you watchin', maybe if you close your eyes?

e: (closes his eyes) Ok, go ahead. Well? (opens his eyes) I don't hear nothing.

n: Maybe if you go over there and close your eyes.

e: (he walks away and sits) How's this?

n: Close your eyes and face the other way, that might do it. (he does)

e: Let me know when you got a tear or two.

n: I will.

e: Nothing yet?

n: Unsettled, too quiet, maybe you should make some noise, sing a song or something.

e: Song?

n: Yeah, a song, you know, like music or something like that.

e: Don't remember no songs I guess. Hey, I know a story.

n: Ok, try that.

e:: I will. See if I can still remember. (He thinks real hard. She reaches quietly into his bag, sneaks some bread out and eats it while he talks.)

e: My mother was looking for me. One day she looked real hard but couldn't find me so she cried. She looked and called out but I didn't answer. I couldn't hear her was the problem. She thought I should hear her but it was just no good 'cause I had my ears closed to her. That's all. It made her sad. It made me sad. That's all. Well you crying?

n: Naaah, guess it don't work this way, you can come back now.

e: Hey, wanna hear a joke kind of story?

n: A joke?

e: Yeah, you know, a story to be happy, a joke.

n: Oh yeah, ok, yeah, I would, that would be ok I guess.

e: Ok.

n: Well?

e: Trying to get it back, just had it but can't remember now.

n: Try harder.

e: (he does) No, no, guess it's gone.

n: Too bad.

e: Yeah.

n: Sun's coming down.

e: Yeah.

n: Gonna be no sun soon.

e: yeah, I gotta get back.

n: yeah.

e: see you next time.

n: Yeah.

e: Why you looking at me like that.

n: Don't know. Just felt like crying again.

e: Oh.

n: yeah. (She cries) I'm crying.

e: Yeah, you're crying now.

n: Yeah, you gonna watch me?

e: Yeah, just a minute I guess.

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(he watches her cry. She stops crying)

e: I guess your done crying.

n: I guess so.

e: bye.

n Nell.

e. Nell?

n: Think that's my name . Nell, just come to me. Funny, huh? Just like that, it come to me, my name.

e: Bye.

(he leaves)

n: bye (she lays down on ground, head on back pack and falls asleep)



Nell and Ernie: Scene Notes.

Relationship: To Be Determined.

This scene is one of my "neutral scenes".

Have you worked with neutral scenes before? Some people call them "open" scenes. They are a great exercise in working with text and a powerful example of one of my other laws of acting:

Acting is not about the words.

My question to you is, if acting is not about the words, what is it about?

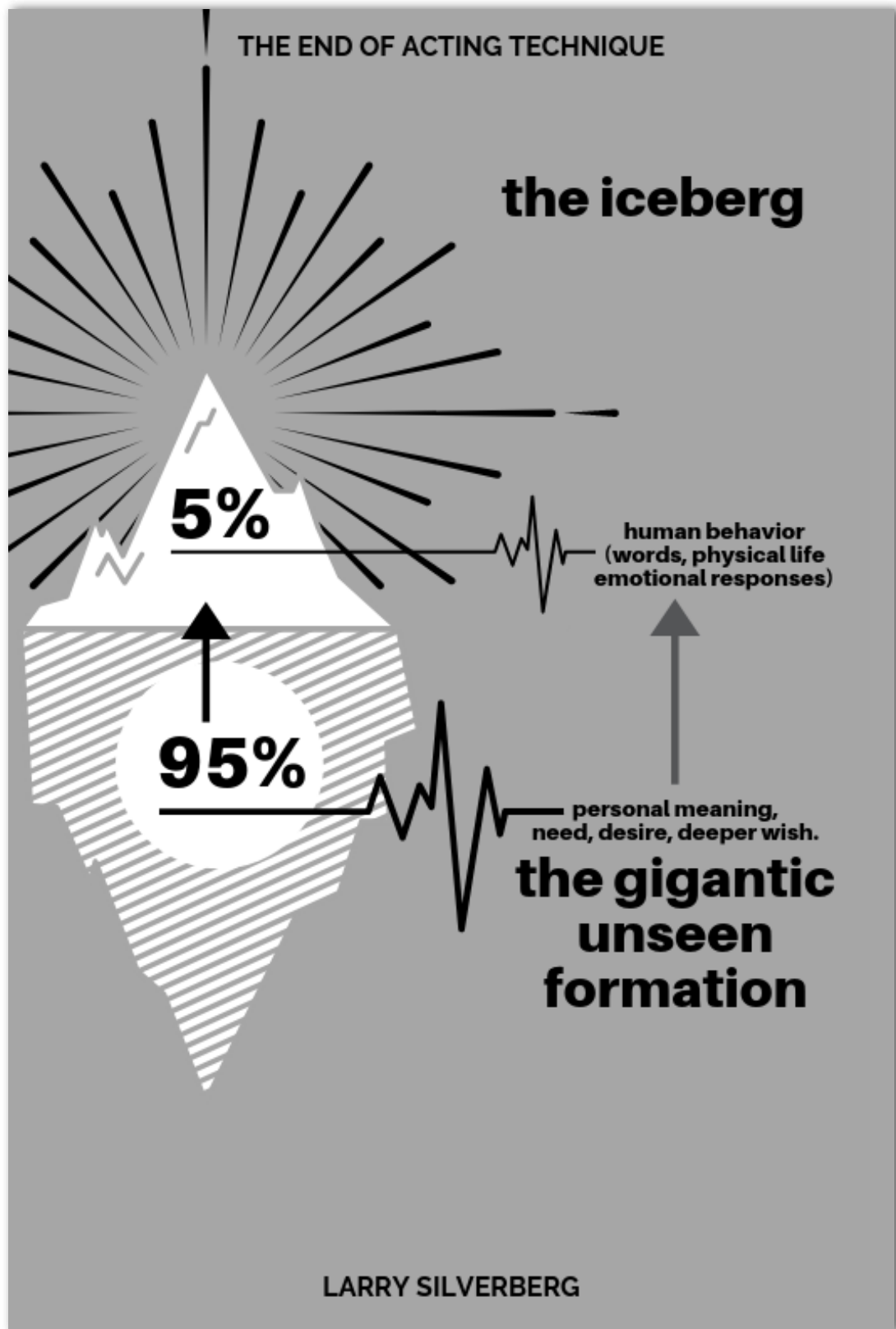
Here's the simple answer.

Acting is not about the words, it is about what makes the words, and all human behavior, necessary. A very big part of your job as an actor is to make the words truly necessary for you to speak.

I have a wonderful diagram for you I call "The Iceberg Diagram" which illustrates this.

It is included in my book, "The End of Acting Technique" and I will share it with you here along with a page from a chapter in that book.

The diagram is on the following page...



From my book, *The End of Acting Technique...*

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In life, all human behavior, including words, physical life and emotional responses, do not come from no where.

Before all words, physical life and emotional responses, there is personal meaning, need, desire and the deeper wish at the core.

When you talk with someone, or when you observe someone's behavior, you are seeing an external manifestation of a deeply personal, unseen process.

When you honestly observe your own words and actions, you will see that they are the result of a deeply personal process unseen to the world around you and known only by you.

The words, physical life and emotional responses are always the last thing to occur. These are just 5% of the story.

Before words, physical life and emotional responses, there is some "baking and brewing" going on down in that "furnace" of yours. This is 95% of the story.

Eventually...

All of that baking and brewing will bubble up to the surface and the world will observe your words, physical life and emotional responses.

I call this "baking and brewing", the **"gigantic unseen formation"**.

As an actor, you must spend a great deal of your time working with the gigantic unseen formation.

Why?

Because the gigantic unseen formation will result in words, physical life and emotional responses that are necessary and true.

Just like in life!

This is exactly what I mean when I say that you must make the need of the character your need.

You do it so that...

Everything you say and everything you do on stage and in front of the camera is necessary and true.

Let's continue with our neutral scene...

The wonderful challenge of this scene is that there are so many unanswered questions. Who are these two people, what is their relationship, how old are they, where do they live, why have they forgotten so much, why does she eat his bread, why does he want to watch her cry, what's the story with their names...? It is up to you to make decisions.

One thing I can tell you is that whatever decisions you and your acting partner come up with, and there are so many possibilities, you must make sure that these are two very real people living in a very real world.

Here's an example of what one of my students came up with. She decided that Nell and Ernie were two elderly people living in a nursing home and suffering from dementia. What a powerful way to justify what happens in the scene, don't you think?

Let's go through some of the details of the scene together...

- At the beginning of the scene, Nell is trying to remember how to play hopscotch. Why is that important to her? Might it be connected to the fact that she thinks it may have just been her birthday?
- She also says that *"no one served any cake."* Who are these people that didn't serve the cake if indeed it was her birthday?
- Ernie tells Nell that he saw her eating a cookie. It sounds like this is an unusual thing to happen.
- It is also suggested that Nell picked up the cookie from the ground because someone dropped it by the dock. Why would she do that? Is it connected to later in the scene when she sneaks the bread out of his bag and eats it?
- We also know that no one uses Ernie's name anymore and that he's now known as "22-10-4A". This doesn't bother him but the fact that this has been done to Nell bothers her a lot.

"I want mine back, I do, I want it back really. Couldn't stop thinking about it last night, cried for a while, just want it back."

She has been suffering over this and last night was especially hard:

"I don't know, could have been all night, didn't sleep, just crying and crying."

- For some reason, Ernie has a fascination with Nell's crying and wants to see it:

e: You wanna cry now?

n: I guess I do.

e: Can I watch?

n: Sure.

e: Well, go ahead.

- When she has a hard time crying, Ernie is happy to accommodate all of Nell's needs to help her start to cry.
- As for Nell, I suggest that getting Ernie to move away from her, to have him look away and to get him to sing or tell a story is all purposeful in order to see if he has any food in his bag!
- The story Ernie tells about his mother is also very interesting. What do you think he means when he says that he had his ears closed to her and that it made both of them very sad?
- What do you think is going on inside Nell when Ernie asks her:

"Why you looking at me like that."

We know it is something very meaningful for her because she responds:

"Don't know. Just felt like crying again."

- And then she does in fact begin to cry. Of course, Ernie stays to watch her cry.
- The we conclude the scene with Nell unexpectedly remembering her name, Ernie leaving and Nell falling asleep.

Ready to get to work? Hey, have fun with this neutral scene and after you work on it, I would love to know what kind of world you created and the decisions you made to bring these two people to life! Send me a note. My email is in the introduction to this book.

Scene 10. Benjy and Maggie



Benjy has three lottery tickets left, he carefully compares numbers to the numbers on the website. No good. he works his way down until he has only one left. He sits on chair and cries. Maggie enters.

Maggie: Oh no, what's going on here?

Benjy: nothing's going on.

M: What is all this crap?

B: Oh my god.

M: Lottery tickets?

B: Mag, I need you. (he hugs her tight)

M: How many you got here?

B: Don't ask me that.

M: Seriously, Benj, how many did you buy this time?

B: I'm down to the last one.

M: Yeah but how many is all this?

B: Twenty thousand.

M: Twenty thousand!

B: Don't parrot me, Mag, don't you parrot me, K'?

M: Twenty thousand? Oh my god, where'd you get the money Benjy, huh, huh, where in the world...

B: Please, don't, don't you hear me asking you for some help here, I need you right now, I don't need no critics right now and you don't say nothin' to mom you here me, you don't go tellin' mom this time I'll never speak to you and that's a promise this time, you hear me!

M: Ok, ok, quit crying for god sake. You stupid, stupid boy, for god sake you bought twenty thousand?

B: Yeah.

M: You bought twenty thousand.

B: Yeah.

M: Oh my god.

B: Only got one left.

M: You checked all these?

B: I won five bucks.

M: You won five bucks?

B: On twenty thousand, I won five bucks.

M: Oh man.

B: I'm begging you, don't you tell mom. Took all my school money, all the money Uncle Sid left me and there's nothing left.

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M: Wow.

B: Yeah.

M: Wow, Benjy, that wasn't very smart was it now.

B: I need you to check the last ticket, Mag, need you to confirm the disaster that's my life, need you to do it 'cause I'm gonna puke, you hear me, I need you to pick that ticket up and check those last six numbers and then I'm gonna get on a bus and go to Orlando.

M: Orlando. What's in Orlando?

B: It's warm, the homeless people stay warm at least.

M: You shut up, Benjy, you hear me, you shut up you don't talk like that. It's money, it's crap, you hear me, what the are you thinking, I'll crack your head open, you just keep that mouth shut, it's money, I don't care what those numbers say.

B: Ok.

M: I mean it, I'll crack that skull of yours wide open.

B: Ok, I said, just look at the numbers and make it final so I can breathe, Maggie, do it already, please, I'm begging you.

M: Ok, I'm doing it.

B: Oh man, here we go...

M: I can't.

B: You have to do it.

M: Twenty thousand dollars Uncle Sid's turning in his grave.

B: I'm addicted and you weren't answering your phone, I couldn't stop myself.

M: I've been busy, got my own crap I'm dealing with not that you care. You don't ever got any room to hear the upside down mess I call me own life Benjy...

B: Would you just read the numbers already.

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M: And it just got a whole lot worse is what I'm saying.

B: Just read the numbers I said!

M: Jeeez. (She picks ticket up next to the computer and looks at the lotto page...) Oh my god!

B: What, what, what...

M: Three, three, the first number it matches, it's a three!

B: You're making me sick with this just do all the numbers and get it done I'm telling you.

M: Hey, zip it charlie who spent his whole inheritance, huh, who, who.

B: I'm begging you get it over with.

M: (picks up ticket, back to the web page...) No, No No No No No No No! Oh, No No No No No No!

B: What, what, give it to me, let me just rip it up already...

M: Eight, eight, eight, the second number, it matches dear god it matches.

B: I can't take this, I can't take it get it over with, please I'm begging you, god, please, god help me...

M: Seven, NOOOOOOOOOOO Seven, Seven, it matches Oh, my god seven matches, that's three, that's three Benjy.

B: Let me see that let me see...

M: Look, look, come here...

B: Do the rest, do the rest...

M: Come here, come here, come here (they hold the ticket and look at the web page together.

M and B: thirty one, what, forty, look, look look look, forty four, holy god all mighty forty four, What what what what NOOOOOOOOOOOO NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO (all kinds of screaming, celebrating, dancing, etc) Holy God, Holy God, Holy God Holy God NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!! Call mom, call mom, call mom, NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO NOOOOOOOOOOOOOO Holy god almighty WOOOOOOOOOOOOOO HOOOOOOOOOOOOO!!!!

Benjy and Maggie: Scene Notes.

Relationship: Brother and Sister.

Let's break the scene down and talk about what we know and what we don't know...

- We know that Benjy bought twenty thousand lottery tickets.
- We know that Benjy has looked at all but three of the tickets when the scene begins and then, before Maggie enters, he looks at two more. They are not winning tickets. When Maggie comes into the room, only one ticket remains to be looked at for possible winning numbers.

How long do you imagine it has taken to look at the numbers on 19,997 lottery tickets? Has he been eating? Sleeping? Bathing? Has he left his apartment since bringing all those tickets home?

- We know that the 19,999 tickets only produced winnings of five dollars.

B: Only got one left.

M: You checked all these?

B: I won five bucks.

- We know that Benjy has made big purchases of lottery tickets before. Maggie says:

"Seriously, Benj, how many did you buy this time?"

- We also know that in a previous lottery event, he got into really bad trouble with his mom:

"...and you don't say nothin' to mom you here me, you don't go tellin' mom this time I'll never speak to you and that's a promise this time, you hear me!"

"I'm begging you, don't you tell mom."

What do you imagine happened? Did he steal money from his mom to buy those tickets? Did he wreck her car because he was rushing to get the tickets before the grocery store closed?

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- We know that Benjy's lottery ticket buying is not a casual, fun thing for him, it is a very serious addiction and he is aware of it. He did reach out for help at some point before he bought the 20,000 tickets, it sounds like he made a few phone call attempts to Maggie, but she didn't answer:

"I'm addicted and you weren't answering your phone, I couldn't stop myself."

(You might find it interesting to know that ticket holders in the Powerball lottery have a 1 in 292,201,338 chance of winning the jackpot. That's like putting into a hat the names of nearly everyone in the U.S. and hoping your name is pulled out. Yet the fantasy of getting rich quick is too tempting for many to resist. About half of Americans have played the lottery at least once. With a growing array of prize draws, electronic games, and scratch cards available, sales in the 43 state lotteries totaled \$70 billion in 2014, or \$300 per every American adult – more than was spent on video games, movie tickets, books, and sporting events combined.

- We also know that Benjy withdrew all of the money that was left to him for his college tuition by his uncle to buy the tickets:

"Took all my school money, all the money Uncle Sid left me and there's nothing left."

We don't know if Benjy is currently in school but it would certainly make the pain of his actions even greater if he is a college student knowing that he will have to drop out of college if he doesn't win any lottery money.

- We know that Maggie wasn't able to answer the phone when Benjy was calling her for help because of a really big problem she is in the midst of. We do not know specifically what it is but it must be a very hard time for her right now.

B: I'm addicted and you weren't answering your phone, I couldn't stop myself.

M: I've been busy, got my own crap I'm dealing with not that you care. You don't ever got any room to hear the upside down mess I call me own life Benjy...

Of course, if you are playing Maggie, you must make a choice about what is happening in her life right now that is so awful.

- We know that Maggie really loves her brother which is clear when he talks about becoming homeless:

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B: I need you to check the last ticket, Mag, need you to confirm the disaster that's my life, need you to do it 'cause I'm gonna puke, you hear me, I need you to pick that ticket up and check those last six numbers and then I'm gonna get on a bus and go to Orlando.

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Those are all the important details. This is a wild ride of a scene, don't you think? You get to go through an emotional roller coaster! You begin in a space of two people who are in a deeply painful moment of their lives:

Maggie has something happening that is a source of great suffering and upset. In addition to that, she walks into a room where her brother who is addicted to buying lottery tickets has just gone off the deep end in his addiction by using all of his school money for his drug of choice.

Benjy has possibly destroyed his whole future by using all of his school money to buy the 20,000 tickets. He has counted all but one and won only \$5.00 and there is only 1 ticket left!

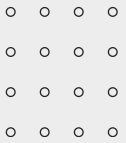
Everything looks as if life is about to become very dark and filled with misery.

And then we have a miraculous reversal. With each number Maggie checks, moment by moment, we move from despair, to a surprising minute glimmer of hope to a greater possibility for relief to an all out joyous and triumphant celebration! Woohoo!

One other thing for you to consider if you are playing Benjy. The more you can bring reality to your activity at the beginning by surrounding yourself with those 19,997 losing tickets, the more life you will bring to the whole scene and the more impact it will have on both you and your acting partner when she enters the room. Yes, you may not have 20,000 actual lottery tickets but do whatever you can to have those "tickets" all around you in the room. Get all of your friends to help you create them. There should be piles and piles of them! You'll see, it will make a world of difference and a lot of fun when the last ticket turns out to be a winner.

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