

SCENE 1

(Lights up. Three Drama Club students, HARPER, BLAZE and WILLOW sit shellshocked. Their PRINCIPAL has just delivered soul-crushing news.)

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

I'm sorry, everyone, but my decision is final.

HARPER

(unable to process)

I'm in shock. Total. Shock.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Harper—

HARPER

See my face, Principal Zimmerhoff? This is my "shock" face.

(She makes a "shock face." BLAZE and WILLOW applaud.)

WILLOW

Brava! Brava!

BLAZE

What a performance!

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

I'm sorry, Harper—

HARPER

But Principal Zimmerhoff! Drama Club... is my LIFE.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

You're being dramatic.

HARPER

I am! It's literally called Drama Club!

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

What's done is done. The school play is officially cancelled.

WILLOW

But auditions are tomorrow! Speaking as a certified empath and champion for radical inclusion, we can't silence the voiceless.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Willow, there's nothing I can do.

(The ever-so-smooth, and self-obsessed, BLAZE tries to fix things.)

BLAZE

(overly slick)

Principal Z, buddy, pal, sunshine... we can work this out. Not sure if you know this, but I'm a bit of a local celebrity.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

(heard this a million times)

You've told me, Blaze...

BLAZE

When I was six, I was the "Vroom-Vroom Boy" in the Murphy Motors Commercials.

(proudly, performing his "catchphrase")

"Car go Vroom-Vroom — Savings go Boom-Boom!"

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

What's your point?

BLAZE

If the play goes on and I get the lead, it'll be a hit. Could do wonders for your career.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

The answer's still no.

(From the corner, a fourth student, DOUG, steps forward. He's a mysterious kid in a trench coat and fedora. Pretty sure he believes he's an actual film noir detective named Mickey Carmichael.)

DOUG

(film noir narration, to audience)

The tension in the room was thick, thick as fog on a moonless night. Thick as peanut butter stuck to the roof of your mouth. Thick as a hippo in a tutu trying to do ballet. What's that hippo thinking? Ya got me.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Who's this?

HARPER

New kid. He's a method actor.

DOUG

The name's Mickey Carmichael...

HARPER

His name's Doug.

(PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF tries to move on.)

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Look, gang... I'm a huge supporter of the arts. But THIS play—

HARPER

(interrupting)

THIS PLAY is a window into the human condition!

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

It's partly my fault. I shouldn't have waited so long to read it.

HARPER

This is censorship!

(PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF turns to the others.)

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Blaze, Willow — as Vice President and Treasurer of Drama Club, have you read “Monkey See, Monkey Do”?

BLAZE

Is that...

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

...the play Harper chose? Yes.

WILLOW

I meant to, but I was at a plant-based yoga retreat for restorative justice.

BLAZE

I was gonna read it, too... but then I figured I'd wait for the movie.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Allow me to share a little “Monkey See Monkey Do.”

(opening the script)

Page 3: “Nine actors in monkey suits enter. They sit on the bare stage and stare at the audience for eleven solid minutes.”

HARPER

Profound, right?

(PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF flips to another page.)

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Page 11: “The stage is now littered with banana peels. One by one, the monkeys slip on them.”

HARPER

Comedy *and* tragedy...

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

Page 19: “The monkeys clamor down from the stage and pick bugs out of the audience’s hair. They eat the bugs.”

(HARPER has officially lost BLAZE and WILLOW.)

BLAZE

Yeah... that’s weird.

HARPER

It’s, like, “WHO’S the monkey?” “WHO’S the banana?”

WILLOW

I don’t get it.

HARPER

It’s ART — you’re not SUPPOSED to GET IT! Principal Zimmerhoff, you can’t cancel the play just because you object to its content!

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

I don’t object to its content. I object because it’s stupid.

BLAZE

It does sound stupid. And I know stupid.

PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF

I feel terribly. Harper, Blaze, Willow... New Kid... I'm always so proud of what the Drama Club does. But if I were you, I'd let folks know tomorrow's auditions are cancelled. Good luck.

(PRINCIPAL ZIMMERHOFF exits. DOUG pipes up from beneath his fedora.)

DOUG

(film noir narration, to audience)

There we were: nearing showtime and fresh outta show. It wasn't just a pickle, folks, it was the whole jar. We were staring down the barrel of a one- way ticket to Flop City... or my name isn't Mickey Carmichael.

HARPER

Your name is Doug!

(WILLOW prepares a consciousness-shifting pep talk.)

WILLOW

Friends, As a lifelong steward of collective healing — and in my role as humanitarian spirit guide — I say we unite... and find a new play.

HARPER

It took me months to find the last one!

BLAZE

(an idea)

I know! What if... we write one?

HARPER

Auditions are tomorrow.

WILLOW

How hard can it be to write a play? Shakespeare wrote, like, a thousand.

HARPER

We can't write a play in one day!

BLAZE

Not sure if you know this, but I used to dabble in TV.

WILLOW & HARPER

WE KNOW!

BLAZE

(false modesty)

Didn't realize you were fans...Anyhoo, I actually wrote a bit on my Murphy Motors commercials. "Car go Vroom Vroom — Savings go Boom Boom!" That was mine.

(WILLOW is excited!)

WILLOW

See? If a simple mind like Blaze's can weave magic, so can we!

HARPER

But plays are complicated. If they're not great, you'll lose your audience.

WILLOW

Nah, audiences are easy to manipulate. All you have to do is turn out and say:

(out, to audience)

"Hey, everyone, if you're the best-looking audience in the world, let me hear you CHEER AS LOUD AS YOU CAN!"

(The real, live audience cheers wildly!)

HARPER

That would never work.

BLAZE

I learned a trick when I wrote for TV: "Write What You Know."

HARPER

If we wrote what you know, the play would be very short.

BLAZE

Watch and learn. Write what you know...

(Blaze pulls out a laptop computer. He begins to type...)

BLAZE (CONT'D)

"Stage lights rise, illuminating a brilliant play. Our debonair lead actor appears!"

(Across stage, a light hits an actor dressed sorta like BLAZE, but more stylized.)

"REBEL"

Huzzah! Tis I, Rebel Steele, handsome heartthrob and beloved local celebrity.

WILLOW

(typing)

"Suddenly, a quirky and impactful young woman enters. Her name is..."

"PHOENIX"

I'm Phoenix Moon, a meaningful advocate for marginalized communities!

HARPER

This is ridiculous.

WILLOW

(to BLAZE, re: the play)

What do we type next?

BLAZE

Write what you know!

(WILLOW and BLAZE take turns typing.)

"REBEL"

Hi, Phoenix Moon!

"PHOENIX"

Hi, Rebel Steele!

(A pause.)

BLAZE

Ummmmm...

(BLAZE types.)

"REBEL"

Phoenix, I have terrible news.

“PHOENIX”

Oh no! What is it, Rebel?

“REBEL”

The school play... it's cancelled.

“PHOENIX”

Oh, no! Why, Rebel?

“REBEL”

That villain, Zimmerhoff! And because Harper has terrible taste in theatre.

HARPER

Hey!

“REBEL”

I know! What if we wrote our own play?

How?

“PHOENIX”

Write what you know!

“REBEL”

(REBEL pulls out a laptop and types)

“Stage lights rise, illuminating a brilliant play... and our debonair lead actor appears!”

(Another actor, dressed just like REBEL, enters.)

“ROGUE FURY”

Huzzah, Tis I, Rogue Fury, handsome heartthrob—

(HARPER leaps up and ends the craziness.)

HARPER

Enough! Stop it! Stop it!

(the “actors” look at her)

Go. Get out of here.

(She shoos the actors off stage like cats. HARPER sighs.)

HARPER (CONT'D)

This is hopeless, gang. Just hopeless.

DOUG

(film noir narration)

"Even Doug agreed it was hopeless," thought Mickey.

HARPER

I'm sorry, but writing a play is too hard, especially in just twenty-four hours. We know nothing about playwriting. It's not like a book telling us "How To Write a Play" is just gonna fall from the sky!

(WHOOSH! Out of the blue, a book falls from the sky, landing with a loud, echo-y thud. They all look at each other.)

HARPER (CONT'D)

(picking up book, reading the title)

"How To Write A Play (In 11 Easy Steps)."

WILLOW & DOUG

Whoa...

BLAZE

Did that book just...

(They all look up at the sky. A beat. Then, a SUPER-OLD JANITOR enters, rolling in a trash-can-on-wheels.)

SUPER-OLD JANITOR

Whoopsy-ma-doodle! Any of ya whippersnappers see a book come a-skitterin' by? The librarian, Miss Whoosy-Whatsits, asked me to recycle it for some cockamamie reason — and it shimmied outta my hands like a jackrabbit with the heebie-jeebies!

(HARPER hides the book behind her back.)

HARPER

Uh, nope. Did you see a book, Willow?

WILLOW

No book here! Did you see a book, Blaze?

BLAZE

Harper's got one behind her back.

(They all stare him down.)

DOUG

(film noir narration)

"Blaze was handsome," thought Mickey, "but sometimes he was dumb as dirt."

SUPER-OLD JANITOR

Okee-dokers, kiddos. But if ya lay your peepers on that book, give a holler!

(SUPER-OLD JANITOR exits. They look at the book again.)

HARPER

"How To Write A Play (In 11 Easy Steps)." By Celestia Von Stagecraft.

DOUG

Celestia Von Stagecraft...

WILLOW

That can't be her real name.

BLAZE

Open it! Open it!

(They crowd around HARPER.)

HARPER

Fingers crossed, here we go...

(As HARPER opens the book, a swirl of lights and sound erupts... and CELESTIA VON STAGECRAFT appears! Dressed in flowing scarves, she is a melodramatic grand dame of the theatre.)

HARPER (CONT'D)

Look, a prologue by the author. You ready?

NOTE: Throughout the play, they interact only with the book, i.e., they do not "see" CELESTIA as she flits through their world.

HARPER (CONT'D)

(in unison, reading)

Dearest artisans, fellow
dream-weavers...

CELESTIA

(grandly, to audience)

Dearest artisans, fellow
dream-weavers...