

HOW TO WRITE A PLAY: STEP TWO

(Lights crossfade to CELESTIA...)

CELESTIA

“Step Two: The Art of Catharsis!”

My cherished apprentices of anguish! My exquisite maestros of misery! My precious pupils of pathos!

(descending into raw emotion)

No scene is complete without its heart-wrenching coup de grace — the emotional meltdown! Subtlety is for suckers... flinch your characters into a frenzy of raw, unbridled despair, their hearts torn from their chests in a full-throated, unrelenting deluge of human torment!

(cheerfully)

Have fun, darlings!

(Lights fade on CELESTIA; up on REBEL and PHOENIX again.)

REBEL

Phoenix, I have terrible news.

PHOENIX

Oh no! What is it, Rebel?

REBEL

The school play... it's—

PHOENIX

Hold up. Aren't you a secret Russian super-agent named Nikolai Smirnov?

(A beat. REBEL thinks.)

REBEL

(straightforward)

Nyet.

(PHOENIX takes a beat. She's OK with that answer.)

PHOENIX

Great! And let's never speak of it again...

(Back to business.)

REBEL

So, about the school play, Phoenix. It's cancelled.

PHOENIX

(concerned, but not upset yet)

Oh no! Why?

(a bit upset)

Why?!?!

(then, an outpour of emotion)

WHY OH WHY IS LIFE FILLED WITH SUCH MADNESS?!?!?!?

(launching into an emotional story, eyes misting up)

This play, Rebel. It's not just a diversion, a lark, a frolic, a bauble, a trifle, a glimmering morsel of whimsy and stagecraft. No! It tells a story.

(growing to full-throated heartbreak)

MY story! Do you HEAR THAT, WORLD?!

(We hear a newborn's cry. MR. & MRS. MOON enter holding a baby.)

PHOENIX (CONT'D)

(wistful, telling her story)

I was born to poor, yet well-meaning parents.

MR. MOON

We are so poor.

MRS. MOON

Yet so well-meaning.

PHOENIX

But, then: tragedy struck! For they were young...

(tears pouring down)

FARTOO YOUNG!

MR. MOON

We can't even rent a car.

MRS. MOON

Or buy a scratch-off lottery ticket.

PHOENIX

They loved me, their little bundle of unfortunate smells...

(falling to her knees, with full-throated emotion)

OH, HOW THEY LOVED ME! But soon they realized: they could never raise me. For they were...

(punctuating each word with unbridled anguish)

FAR! TOO! YOUNG!

(again, punctuating every word)

And FAR! TOO! POOR!

(again)

And NOT! AS WELL-MEANING! AS THEY THOUGHT!

(PHOENIX melts into a puddle of emotion, as her parents hold the baby awkwardly them with disdain.)

MRS. MOON

Does this thing EVER stop crying?

MR. MOON

Maybe we can put it in a drawer?

MRS. MOON

(aghast)

A drawer?!?! Excellent idea.

(the baby cries again)

PHOENIX

(calling out to the heavens, through)

WHY OH WHY IS THE WORLD SO CRUEL?

(even more dramatic)

And, WHY, OH WHY, IS THERE NO PIZZA?!?!

(Lights crossfade back to the Drama Club.)

DOUG

(film noir narration, to audience)

Mickey Carmichael was despondent, watching their dreams flicker like a neon sign for two-dollar nachos in a one-horse town. Drama Club was up Drama Creek without a Drama Paddle, and the water teemed with mediocrity and desperation.

HARPER

Are ya done, Doug?

DOUG

(still in "narration" mode)

"And with that, Doug was done."

WILLOW

Are we getting anywhere with this play?

BLAZE

Y'know, this reminds me of my first time starring as the "Vroom Vroom" Boy for Murphy Motors.

(checking in with the others)

Not sure you if know this, but—

WILLOW & HARPER

WE KNOW!

BLAZE

Cool, cool. Never mind.

(turning the page in the book)

What's next?

(Crossfade to CELESTIA)