

My Other Job

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ABSTRACT

*Actors in New York City are rarely just actors. Due to the mercurial, enigmatic nature of the profession (and, of course, the cost of living there), actors are more-often-than-not employed in at least one other job: their survival job. But which is an actor's primary job—the one that pays the bills or the one that feeds the soul? At what point does an out-of-work actor stop being an actor and start being a waiter, bartender, or babysitter? What makes actors choose to pursue an acting career in the first place; and what, if anything, might cause them to leave acting behind in pursuit of greater stability? These are just some of the questions posed to 5 real working actors based in New York City. The realities of an acting career are often glossed over for flash and fame, but show business is just that—a business—with all the strategy, politics, and compromises the word suggests. Using the actors' own words, *My Other Job* asks audiences to think a little more deeply about the lives of these active artists—their struggles, humor, grace, and determination—as they divulge very personal, very real stories about the*

business of pretending.

The creative spark for *My Other Job* ignited through spontaneous combustion, of sorts. During a rehearsal process for a theatrical reading, a fellow actor entered the studio complaining about his “other job”—how it often made him late for auditions and rehearsals but was ultimately necessary for paying rent, especially since performance work rarely offered such financial security. His offhand frustration provoked the cast into a spirited discussion related to the topic of work: sympathetic tales of juggling multiple schedules, creative techniques for organizing time around important auditions, profound desires to find balance between personally-fulfilling artistic projects and financially-lucrative, flexible employment. In that moment, we realized the conversation reflected recurring themes expressed in countless rehearsals, dressing rooms, and audition spaces throughout our careers yet rarely included in public discourse regarding the acting profession. We immediately agreed such stories needed to be investigated further and shared widely.

When choosing participants for the project, we deliberately endeavored to include actors from a variety of backgrounds, experiences, and points of view; still, we discovered inescapable overlap not only among their individual stories, but also among the way those stories were told. Most notably, all five interviewees consistently voiced multiple characters in dialogue within their own narratives. These actors—professional storytellers—expertly shifted from simple response to polymorphous portrayal and back again, blurring the line between conversation and theatrical storytelling even in the context of informal interviews. Their natural giftedness for embodying drama made our job of crafting a script quite simple; we merely picked up their cues.

When transcribing the interviews and formatting the script, we first adhered strictly to the common ethnodramatic convention of preserving stutters, pauses, and vocal interrupters verbatim; however, around the third or fourth draft, when characters and style were emerging cohesively, we began critically considering whether every “um” was serving the storytelling or hindering clarity to the point of distraction. As researchers and playwrights, we wanted to represent our participants

with the same spirit of generosity they gave us, believing in the power of vocal nuances to reveal unique character traits and even subconscious understandings. But as actors and directors, we concluded some minor editing could facilitate stronger aesthetic choices in performance such as pacing, comedic timing, transitions, and narrative arc without sacrificing vocal style in relation to character or plot. It was (and is) our belief that this script should functionally serve eventual production, so these stories and ideas can reach the widest audience in the most effective way. That intention, to us, felt more authentic and representative of our participants than unyielding devotion to a few “ums.”

The conclusion of the piece may be viewed as controversial by some ethnodramatic purists. Though rooted in the interviews, each character’s fate is revealed in a fictional final scenario. In reality, of course, they are still lives in process with endings unknown, but we decided to utilize the dramatic potential of reality-based fiction in an effort to reach beyond these five narratives and represent actors’ vast potentiality. Aspirational, realistic, even disappointing professional trajectories such as fame, steadfast perseverance, or divergence highlight beginnings and ends of roles yet to be played, other jobs yet to be discovered. Many of our participants have since viewed the piece in performance, often commenting how much their lives have changed since this fleeting career snapshot. Moments of despair or uncertainty depicted in the work are now outshined by accomplishments, whether in acting or other fields entirely. This speaks to the ephemeral nature of theater itself, and to the importance of ethnodrama as an extension of oral history traditions meant to offer guidance and reflect truth from specific people in specific times for purposes of understanding and growth.

The most consistent piece of audience feedback we receive is that reading or watching this play feels like “actor therapy.” *My Other Job* presents the successes and struggles of a group of actors in pursuit of their professional dreams, highlighting the communal intersections of their individual experiences. In a field that so often champions individuality, even to the point of exclusion, we found this exploration a welcome change. Many actors who have read or watched the piece claimed to feel authentically seen and heard, beyond stereotypical

misconceptions of their occupation as glamorous. Non-actors have expressed newfound respect for the level of difficulty inherent in the daily responsibilities of a performer. Our hope is that the work may find a home in secondary and post-secondary acting curricula as a means of fostering balanced expectations for those pursuing a path to professional artistry. *My Other Job* does not shy away from the challenges faced by professional actors in New York City—self-doubt, financial instability, familial and societal pressure, work-life balance, and perseverance in a field fraught with constant judgment—but it also reveals the steadfast strength of an artists' internal motivation, the ever-changing definition of success, and the enduring hope of achieving it.

MY OTHER JOB

By Cali Moore and Rachel Tuggle Whorton

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SYNOPSIS

Actors in New York City are rarely just actors. Due to the mercurial, enigmatic nature of the profession and, of course, the cost of living there, actors are more-often-than-not employed in at least one other job: their survival job. But which is an actor's primary job—the one that pays the bills or the one that feeds the soul? At what point does an out-of-work actor stop being an actor and start being a waiter, a bartender, or a babysitter? What makes actors choose to pursue an acting career in the first place; and what, if anything, might cause them to leave acting behind in pursuit of a more stable life?

These are just some of the questions posed to 5 real working actors based in New York City. The realities of working as an actor are often glossed over for flash and fame, but show business is just that—a business—with all the strategy, politics, and compromises the word suggests. *My Other Job* reveals the struggles, humor, grace, and determination present in each of these 5 actors as it asks audiences to think a little more deeply about the lives of their waiters, bartenders, babysitters, or even their doctors, teachers, and real estate agents. *My Other Job* uses the actual words of these active artists to tell very real stories about the business of pretending.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

October 4, 2014

Staged reading at Emerging Artists Theater in New York City

Alan – Erik Shuler

Ophelia – Inuka Ivaska

Scott – Nick Sakai

Jess – Elizabeth Nestlerode

Joe – Nathan Chang

July 24, 26, & 29, 2017

Equity showcase performances at NYSummerfest in New York City

Alan – Erik Shuler

Ophelia – Ambe Williams

Scott – Christopher Armond

Jess – Emily Batsford

Joe – Laris Macario

Nominated for 7 festival awards: Best Play, Most Creative Play, Best Director (won), Best Actress – Ambe Williams, Best Actor – Christopher Armond, Best Choreography, and Best Lighting Design.

CHARACTERS

Alan (m) early 20s, a nice Midwestern boy, wide-eyed and eager

Ophelia (f) mid 20s, Black, New York City native, funny, warm, and genuine.

Scott (m) late 40s, a father with two children, practical yet dramatic

Jess (f) 30s, from the South, hopeful but conflicted

Joe (m) 30s, a bartender, determined and intense, his own number-one fan

A NOTE FOR PRODUCTION

Any references that begin to feel dated to the point of obscuring understanding can be substituted for more current references that maintains the original intention of the speaker. These moments are noted with an asterisk (*).

Unless specifically noted, characters may be performed by actors of any race/ethnicity. When casting, productions should actively seek to

represent the vast diversity present within the acting profession itself.

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MY OTHER JOB

*Spot on Alan, an actor in his early
20s, wide-eyed and well-intentioned*

ALAN

First and foremost, I'm an actor because that is my passion. That's the job I wanna have.

*Spot on Ophelia, an actress in her
20s, New York native*

OPHELIA

I'm an actor and a musician and sometimes a dancer, but mostly an actor and a musician because that's what I went to school for. Not, you know, the other shit. It's the stuff that I've been training for since I was four years old. It's just the thing that I wanna do the most.

*Spot on Scott, an actor in his late
40s, married with two children*

SCOTT

You know, I've been doing this forever and ever. I was in college in Massachusetts, so I did a few movies there, and it was awesome. It was like 'I gotta do this forever.' And I feel good about me. I'm good at it.

Spot on Jess, an actress from the

South in her 30s.

JESS

Well I would say I'm trying to get a [laughs] a performing job. I have a catering job right now...I have two catering jobs.

Spot on Joe, an actor in his 30s.

Tall, thin, intense.

JOE

Right now I'm a bartender at Broadway shows. So I serve drinks preshow and during intermission. I was at *The Mystery of Edwin Drood* at Studio 54, then I was at *The Big Knife*, then *Jersey Boys*. I did the Foxwoods for *Spiderman*, *Trip to Bountiful* at Stephen Sondheim Theatre, with a couple others sprinkled in there. We get to see the shows and we get to see the changes with different casts; and even though we're just the bartenders, we're human. We have our opinions about which performers we like. [laughs] And so I'll be cleaning the bar and I'll be like "Oh, he should have warmed up a little bit more tonight," or "He didn't have an A-flat in that song." [laughs] So I can have my opinions. They can be strong. They are worthless because [laughs] it's sort of like being a backseat actor. I'm not in the show...myself. I've been called in for *Jersey Boys*...5 times now? And so every time they get to the side that I've had to read a million times in screeners and callbacks, I go up there and watch and I'm always like, "There's not a single choice he's making that I'm not making. There is nothing about this performance that I cannot do. Why isn't it working?" And then I have to go get ice so I can serve intermission.

SCOTT

So many...not many...a few years ago I had just met with somebody and asked them to make a contribution to the organization. Oh, so I do fundraising for different organizations. Primarily I focus on the entertainment industry. I was asking for a lot of money. And it was a great conversation, etcetera etcetera. And a couple of days later I was called in for a show they were producing. And I auditioned for them and they didn't know that I did what I did. They were perfectly lovely. And the

producer looked very perplexed, because he couldn't place where he knew me from and I wasn't about to say "I just asked you for a lot of money." So he kinda let it go and then the next day he called me and he's like

ALAN (as producer)

I just want you to know that I know who you are now and it was a little strange that you weren't so forthcoming about it.

SCOTT

And I said you know, I keep everything separate. I'm an actor first and that is how I make money second.

JESS

Um, about the first month I moved here I was working for this producer named Alex Smith. And it was just like an internship, but I ended up being like his assistant everything. Like I was originally just supposed to work on his website, but I ended up calling people, trying to get them to invest. Um, and then I got...well, he was also shooting a coffee commercial at the time and called me the morning he was shooting it. I wasn't working with him that day, but he called me and was like

JOE (as producer)

Hey, can you come in? The seamstress didn't show up and we need someone to help. Do you sew?

JESS

So I'm like well yeah, I went to an all-girls Catholic high school and they made me take Home Ec. in order to graduate. Uh, I mean, I have some skills in how to sew and cook for my husband because I'm supposed to be getting married and having children because that is what the South promotes. I don't know. But anyway, I kind of got roped into that. It ended up being a lot of fun. I made a lot of costume pieces and, you know, made sure everyone was comfortable. And like, tried to de-stress everyone. So I got to get coffee for people [laughs]. You know, be everyone's slave. But it was fun...I kind of wish I still had it.

OPHELIA

I just quit my restaurant job because I got fed up with working in a restaurant. I've been working in a restaurant since I was right outta school. At first I lied about having restaurant experience. I made up a restaurant I knew in New Hampshire where I did my summerstock gig, but I don't like dealing with people that are so needy for everything. What I mean by this is like, I don't mind helping people, but I feel like when people go into a restaurant, like a switch turns off and all of the sudden they just become ass holes. I hate...old...women. I really hope that when I get old I am not that bitter about my life. Like nothing makes them happy. They don't wanna be on the mezz...

JESS (as old woman)

Why aren't we by a window?

ALAN (as old woman)

My feet hurt.

SCOTT (as old woman)

Can I get some water?

JOE (as old woman)

Where's the server?

OPHELIA

[breathes out] Hate it. I hate it!

ALAN

I love it! It is really probably the best survival job I've had. It's a pooled house, which basically means we're all supportive, we're all there for each other and the hours are incredibly flexible, easy for me to go to auditions, and the food is incredible. It's very educational. We have wine class. We're constantly learning about cheese. So even though I'm not in it for the career of service, it's a wonderful place to be with people that are career servers that have so much knowledge. It's kind of like working with your professors from college. I mean they're so intelligent and they know every backstory about the history of the milk from the cheese and

everything. It's...it's definitely [*clears throat*] it's the kind of place that I think I...I could see myself being at for a long time while I'm striving to hit my big break. It's like they always say

JESS, OPHELIA, SCOTT, and JOE (as they)

It takes 15 years for an overnight success.

ALAN

And I don't necessarily think it does happen in a big break situation. I mean, unless it is Broadway, which would also be nice. But I think, um, I have like little specific dream roles that I have actually, in my phone, an entire list of things that I'm aspiring for in my career. And as I get cast in them I'm gonna start to knock them off. It's kind of like my actor's bucket list. [*pause*] No! I can totally tell you. Do you mind if I pull it out? [*digs in his bag for his phone*]. I don't have it all...off the top of my head. Ok, so, in no particular order:

As the following list is quickly rattled off, we see projections of Alan in costume appearing as each of these roles.

ALAN

Um, Boq in *Wicked*, Princeton/Rod in *Avenue Q*, Franz in *Rock of Ages*, Seymour in *Little Shop of Horrors*, Benjy in *My Favorite Year*, Younger Brother in *Ragtime*, Abraham in *Altar Boyz*, Katurian in *The Pillow Man*, Moritz in *Spring Awakening*, Leo Frank in *Parade*, Anthony in *Sweeney Todd*, Cinderella's Prince in *Into the Woods*, The Gangster in *The Drowsy Chaperone*, Peter in *Bare*, Emcee in *Cabaret*, Roger in *New Brain*, Posner in *The History Boys*, Prior/Louis/Joe in *Angels in America*, and Leo in *The Producers*. And I'm gonna add one more to that which is Davey in *Newsies*. You know, I took my parents to see it on Friday and I just, I almost cried because I want it so badly and I see myself in either Jack or Davey and I know I could do it, you know. And it's like, it's just frustrating because I felt like I was seeing, not to be critical, but I was kind of realizing it wasn't such a perfect performance, and I was like this is so attainable. They got the leg up 'cause they were cast in the first

production, which I was out of town for the auditions, and it's like those kind of opportunities that make you kind of, it feeds your passion. I was born to play those roles. I look at that list probably on like at least a weekly basis if not every other day to kind of keep inspiring myself.

OPHELIA

One of my first dance calls in the city I was called back for *Hairspray* the tour and we had to go in for a dance call. I had a fear of dance calls for a long time after that cause I went in and I got called back, it was cool, then they gave us a dance to learn over the weekend. They're like

SCOTT (as they)

Alright, learn this dance. We'll make cuts on Sunday.

OPHELIA

So then they separated the, all the black performers and all the white performers you know. Whatever. It's fine. So then we were starting to do, you know, "Nicest Kids in Town" was what we were doing and then all of the sudden the choreographer was like

SCOTT (as choreographer)

You know what, screw this! We 'bout to get DOWN!

OPHELIA

And everyone was like

JESS, JOE, SCOTT, and ALAN (as everyone)

Aww yeah...

OPHELIA

Except for me. I was like wait a minute, I, I went over "Nicest Kids in Town." I know that really well...so then we had to do "Run Tell That." Ooooooh it was hideous. He taught it to us and everybody was just like going hard. Going so hard. I'm like this one guy, he started singing while he was doing it. He gave a full performance. Everybody was shouting out people's names like

JOE and ALAN (as everyone)

Go Kiki!

SCOTT and JESS (as everyone)

Show 'em what you're made of!

OPHELIA

[*laughs*] And of course Kiki was really good, and...I remember I did it and I, I'm dyslexic so it takes me a long time to learn stuff. And [*laughs*] I did the whole thing backwards. Like I did it to the one different side and I was like [*does an arm movement*] but everybody was already on that side. I ran out of the audition and I cried so hard down the street towards Macy's. Just like on the phone with my mom like, "I just don't know what I'm doing." And I didn't go to another dance call for a long time after that. Probably a couple of years cause I was so terrified. Yeah.

Everytime they're like

ALL (as they)

It's a dance call!

OPHELIA

I'm like...I'll go to sleep instead.

SCOTT

So I go in to audition for this Michael Douglass movie with a really awesome casting director. And the next day I get a call that I booked a role in a Michael Douglass movie. And I'm like [*high pitched voice*] "Oh my god!" And I call everyone I fucking know. Because it's not an under 5, it's a serious serious role! And so they say,

ALAN (as they)

Oh Scott, on Tuesday you're going to come in for the table read.

SCOTT

And it...like...I'm telling you there must have been more celebrities in

this movie than ever. And I go and I am like...so proud and thrilled. Thrilled! So I get there and the casting director is like

ALAN (as casting director)

Listen, hang tight, we are going to get to you folks in a little bit. We just have to set up the table. Look at the script.

SCOTT

And I'm like [*sing-song voice*] "Alright!" And I'm looking through it, flipping through the pages, and I'm like gosh! I have four scenes. This is major. And so I'm sitting there reading and like an hour goes by, and the casting director is looking at me and looking at the assistant and they're chatting. Finally the assistant comes over and she goes

OPHELIA (as assistant)

I've never in my career had this happen to me.

SCOTT

What's up?

OPHELIA

You're not going to believe this...we hired the wrong Scott Stringer.

SCOTT

[*laughing*] I'm sorry, I think I lost my hearing, I'm sorry what did you say?

OPHELIA

We hired the wrong Scott Stringer. I am...I don't even know what to tell you.

SCOTT

I don't know what to tell you either. How does that happen?

OPHELIA

Because the Scott Stringer we intended to hire is a 70-year-old man, and the role requires that.

SCOTT

But you...I signed a contract.

OPHELIA

I know. I don't even know what more to say.

SCOTT

[*laughs*] I...it was...I mean how horrible is that? How FUCKING...I was like...the worst...the wrong Scott Stringer? I was devastated. DEVASTATED. The wrong Scott Stringer?! So I was like maybe he's the wrong Scott Stringer, and she goes

OPHELIA

No. You should put an initial in your name.

SCOTT

And I was like "Alright?" I left there and literally, it was down on Hudson Street, I walked all the way to 103rd. I was just in a fog. It was just...it was awful. I don't know how it happened. I have no answer. It was perplexing. And she said to me

OPHELIA

Scott, we had to cast this. And you were Scott Stringer.

SCOTT

I AM Scott Stringer.

OPHELIA

Yeah, but you're not the Scott Stringer we intended.

JESS

We were putting on this show called *Rumple Who*. It was terrible. I mean it was really awful. But fun, and I kind of needed it. It was based on Rumpelstiltskin, as you can tell. And it was for kids, as you can tell. I was the Queen. But, um...the dialogue was poorly written. It was the worst ever. And our set piece, our set PIECE. We had no scenery. It was a

chair.

Projector shows picture of a chair

A throne.

Switches to a picture of a throne

With this weird creepy clown face painted on it.

*Picture of a creepy clown face
appears on the throne*

And it was falling apart. *[laughing]*.

Switches to a picture of it broken

And there was a forest,

Picture of sad forest backdrop

which was one tree *[laughing]* painted on the back of this shitty wooden throne.

*Picture of tree painted on shitty
wooden throne*

So that was our set.

Screen goes blank

It may have had apples on it...

*Picture of the set just covered in
apples*

but yeah, it was really sad. *[laughing]*. Some of our audiences were like two people. It was really depressing. But I mean, it's a great story. Oh,

and the music was so bad. I'm trying to remember it so I can sing it. Um...I don't know. I guess I blocked it out.

JOE

And the reason it was the worst was not the people I was working with or even the theater I was working with. It was purely that the costumes were insane. I was doing a production of The Phantom Tollbooth. It was a children's show, playing at one point in the show The Dodecahedron who was literally a twelve sided walking geometrical figure.

During the following, a silent film plays. It is Joe dressed as the Dodecahedron, ravaging countrysides Godzilla-style, being chased by villagers with pitchforks, etc.

They built a dodecahedron costume out of...it was a band...marching band bass drum harness and they built out from that using particle board. And they tied them and connected them all with a metal frame or...no, it was like PVC pipe. But it was the heaviest costume. I mean it was huge! Once I was in it I couldn't even get my arms out, so only my hands were visible. Like elbows into my sides and hands out walking in a very...like a "We've got magic to do" pose where like the hands are out but the elbows are in. And I was forced into that position for the entire time I was in the costume. The costume was so big I couldn't fit through the doors on stage so I had to saddle through them sideways. And we didn't have normal doors because it was a traveling performance, so um, there was like a sort of beaded curtain but it was made out of ribbon. It was just like overlapping packaged ribbons hanging from floor to ceiling that could part when we went through them. But because of my costume they would always get caught. So I would be covered in these ribbons and I would try to swat them away. And all I can get out are my wrists and my hands in this giant dodecahedron costume while I'm trying to have a conversation with various characters on stage. I am supposed to just like appear on stage. Just fly through those doors. And I couldn't.

ALAN

The barn theatre that I worked at was actually an Equity theatre, but they were definitely long hours. So you'd perform the show, you work all day, then you perform at night, and then you go to the bar show and perform another show and then you get up and do it again and repeat repeat repeat. But so many things happened because it's such an old space. For instance, when we were doing a production of *Cats*, we had a spotlight tower within the set and of course McCavity goes to exit the stage and we had a big flash pot go off and we're all sitting there perked up [*holds hands up like cat paws*] and all of the sudden, right next to Deuteronomy's face,

JESS, JOE, OPHELIA, SCOTT

BOOM!

ALAN

During a performance, the entire spotlight tower just burst into flames and we're all looking at it and looking at him and, you know, of course, full cat face on...

ALL

Meow

ALAN

and we're like

JESS, JOE, OPHELIA, SCOTT

Oh!

ALAN

And then my friend Eric, without even thinking exits the stage and goes and grabs a fire extinguisher and puts it out and the best thing about that is that instead of the audience thinking that was a total mistake, they all burst into applause like it was the most amazing theatrical effect they'd ever seen.

JOE

And at one of the performances the ribbon got so caught on the dodecahedron costume that as I moved forward it pulled the back of the set onto me. The ribbons like pulled down the backdrop which was on these giant pipes. And it didn't hit me on the head but it landed on the top of the dodecahedron. So I'm tangled up in the ribbons with the entire set on my back and I can't reach it to get it off. So I have to ask...in character...the other actor, "Get me out of this thing!" And still go on with the show.

ALAN

And then further, we had done that performance on the 4th of July and the air conditioning went out. I don't know if you have ever had to wear a unitard, but let alone a unitard with full wig and full cat face. It was like impossible to keep our cat patterns from running together. We were melted kitties.

OPHELIA

So the first years out of school when Broadway was clearly not happening was really hard, and I was so depressed and down on myself.

SCOTT

And it's definitely come as I've gotten older. When I was younger I was always like "They should hire me. Why aren't they hiring me? What's wrong with them? What's wrong with me?" You know, that paranoia. Now I'm like FUCK THEM. This is what I am. Either I fit or I don't fit into your plan. But I'm 40-something. That outlook takes a long time.

JESS

I like New York, but I don't love it. I don't feel like I belong here...It's just different. [pause]. Before I moved up here I was so ready to...I guess I'll give you the backstory. So for college, or when I was auditioning for colleges to go to, I didn't really get in to anywhere I wanted to go for theater, but I had always been good at science and I like potentially wanted to be a doctor, but it was always my backup plan. Always. Then when I didn't get in, my heart was broken. So I decided OK, I'll go to Tulane in New Orleans, stay home. Tulane had this program called Creative Scholars where they offered students who were not your typical

science major a chance to get into med school without taking the MCAT. But it was a program that you had, um, you had to fit all these requirements before your sophomore year, like get such and such GPA and go through an interview process. And it was kind of intense for the first two years of college. I mean, I made it through. So then my whole plan had changed. I was just going to be a musical theatre major but also do pre-med.

*Cast reacts, impressed. Maybe they
clap or comment.*

So I got into Tulane med school, and two weeks before med school started I was like fuck this. I'm so afraid right now. And I...I don't really want to do this. I kind of, like, this has been my dream to come up here and try to pursue this, so why, I mean the only time I'm going to have to come up here is right now. I mean, I won't be able to do this while I'm in residency. And after seven years of school, I'm not going to want to come up here again and try to make it happen. Um, am I talking too much? [laughs] So, like two weeks before school I ended up emailing them and deferring, because I have three years to go back without losing my spot in med school, without losing my scholarship. So I'm really not losing anything by not being there. Maybe some of the knowledge I had. Like I feel like I've gotten stupider since I moved here. Um, living here is hard. I don't know if I should go back to med school. Like, I had this acting teacher and he told me to

JOE (as acting teacher)

Make...a decision!

JESS

I couldn't, I couldn't do it. Like he gave me an ultimatum.

JOE (as acting teacher)

Tell your parents you are NEVER coming back to New Orleans, and tell your ex-boyfriend that you aren't coming back, and you aren't going to med school, and that THIS is going to be your life.

JESS

And I told my ex-boyfriend...but I didn't believe it. And I told my parents that I might not go back to med school, but I couldn't just say I'm not going to do it. I couldn't do it.

OPHELIA

Sometimes it's hard when it's like

ALAN

I went to school for this.

OPHELIA

I'm a hundred thousand dollars in debt for this.

JOE

And yet I can't perform it.

OPHELIA

But Snooki (*) you know, she can make a million dollars getting drunk and showing her vag everywhere. I don't get it. [laughs] It's like if I went to school for this I should be able to work in the thing that I have put my blood, sweat and tears in. You know? Doctors go to school and make money off of what they do. Lawyers wanna do it. I don't know why people think that I just wanna sit in a tree and write songs, you know?

SCOTT

And when you're in between things and they're like

JESS (as they)

So, what are you doing?

SCOTT

Auditioning

JESS (as they)

Huh?

SCOTT

They don't get it. That it is part of the job. I'm like I'm doing a lot of auditioning, and they're like

JESS (as they)

What does that mean? Why do you have to do it so much? Why aren't you booking more?

ALL

WHAT?!

ALAN

I remember when I was going to school or just graduating high school and I was going to college, so my parents' best friends were like

SCOTT (as friends)

Oh, but you're gonna double major in business right? You have a backup already planned?

ALAN

They would constantly ask those leading questions and I was, I mean, my program that I went to, I majored in musical theatre but I took all the acting option classes so I pretty much got a double major of acting and musical theatre. I minored in dance as well and I studied abroad, so I worked hard. And it was funny because my answer to them would always be, like, I am majoring in business. I'm majoring in show business. And I have amazing parents. They're very proud of me, and they're always...you know I even apologized to them that I'm sorry I haven't made it yet because I know that they're rooting for me, but they understand it takes time and they, they believe in me so much that it makes me re-believe in myself.

OPHELIA

My mom is super supportive. Even to this day she's like

JESS (as mom)

How was your audition? How did it go?

OPHELIA

Or she'll hear me practicing, sometimes she likes to go to my voice lessons and sit in the corner and she's like

JESS (as mom)

That sounded really good.

OPHELIA

Or...

JESS (as mom)

Something doesn't sound good. Well you know I don't have the right terms but it just, well, you know, I think it was a little flat.

OPHELIA

Everything to her is a little flat.

SCOTT

Oh yes, my family is very supportive. My sister is a teacher and she loves to come check out my shows. And oh my gosh, my wife is the best. The BEST! She SO wants it for me. And when it happens she is so into it. And you know, when you don't have someone who is supportive, it can be the worst thing because you're battling that and also trying to have this career. So it's like no win!

JESS

I was in a five year relationship with this guy before I moved up here and, um, he understood that this was really important to me and it could potentially end the relationship if I moved up here. But he's been the one that, we're still very good friends and I still talk to him almost every day, and he's, um, he's probably been the most understanding of me following my dreams. He knows that I have to do this if I'm going to get on with my life, even if nothing happens up here. He knew, as angry as it made him that I was leaving him to move up here, he knew it was the right decision. We tried to do, like, it worked out for maybe six months long distance. But we were both getting very frustrated with one another and just not being able to respond and lifestyles and schedule changes

being a big factor. But I mean who knows. Especially if I move back home, I don't know. He is in school working on a Ph.D. in comparative politics. So, um, that's what he's doing.

OPHELIA

Actually, what I'm going through right now has made me really, slightly question how long I would be willing to work at this. Um, my, I guess he's my boyfriend. [*breathes out*]

Cast looks at Ophelia, skeptically

Whatever. Whatever he is. Um, he asked me if I would be ready, within about 2 years time, to get married and have children. 2 years now. We've only been dating for 6 months, and I mean we're at that point, you know, we love each other, things are going really well. But he kinda gave me an ultimatum. Weirdly. Now he'll be like

JOE (as boyfriend)

I didn't give you an ultimatum.

OPHELIA

But no, it was an ultimatum, 'cause he was definitely like

JOE (as boyfriend)

If you're not ready I may have to go somewhere else.

OPHELIA

Which is just like, you know, you know full well that the career I've chosen takes a lot of time. Takes a lot of energy. And he's like

JOE (as boyfriend)

Yeah, you can go hard for the next two years.

OPHELIA

What do you think I've been doing for the past four? Just being cute? [*laughs*] Just waitin'? Like you just met me in a time where now I audition smart, so I don't go to Music Man being like I can totally be Marian the

Librarian. I don't play that game anymore...On Sunday he was like

JOE(as boyfriend)

You know, if you get pregnant you could do maternity leave from Broadway.

OPHELIA

Or I'll just leave the show. It's like people get booked based on if they fit a costume.

JOE (as boyfriend)

That's so harsh.

OPHELIA

Yeah, I know. So please don't tell me I'm gonna have four kids. It's not gonna work. It's not gonna work. So it's hard, but it also made me realize that my dreams are so important to me and they mean so much to me and they've been here, here before him and they will be here after him regardless of what happens with us in the future. Like, I need to make this happen so either you're with it or you're against it. Like, it's that serious. And it's always been my fear, will I have to choose between being in love and being married or being married to my career?

JESS

Can I do both?

ALAN

Is it possible?

OPHELIA

I just need someone that is understanding of what the situation is and, you know, not trying to get me all pregnant and stuff. Like, why is your biological clock ticking and mine not? How 'bout YOU get pregnant and I'll watch! Come on. Dumbass.

SCOTT

So I was married once before. And I'll never forget she said to me

JESS (as wife)

I feel like your acting career is like an affair.

SCOTT

Uh, wha?

JESS (as wife)

Because you're out all the time with that other person. You don't talk enough about that person, so I don't know what's going on.

SCOTT

It was so hurtful. I feel like your acting career is an affair? She was all about: you work, you make money, you have a family. You know, and everything had its compartment. And I was with her for a long time. A long time. So...it was draining. Because it was like, do I take the tour that takes me away? Or do I not take it? And she would refuse to let me take certain things. And that's probably why we aren't together anymore. It's not easy.

JOE

Bartending is not easy, but we have some fun. My favorite was JK Simmons came in one night to *The Mystery of Edwin Drood*

*Headshot of JK Simmons appears on
projector*

and I mean he is recognizable to most people as

ALAN

"Hey there's that guy."

JOE

But I KNOW him. I mean he was in *Spiderman*. He was on *The Closer*. I met him through summer stock. He came up through the theater, and every summer at the theater I worked at in Montana he would come to the company softball game. And so he just wanted a bottle of water, so I gave him a bottle of water on the house. That's one of the few things

we can do, and he was like

SCOTT (as JK)

No, I can buy a bottle of water

JOE

No, from one Big Fork alum to another. That's on me.

SCOTT (as JK)

Oh great! You're from Big Fork?

JOE

And suddenly we have this connection and we start a conversation instead of "Welcome to the theater at Studio 54." So it was cool to see him go from being like a begrudging celebrity to being a human being. He clearly put up a wall like

SCOTT (as JK)

I'm just here to see the show. I don't want to talk about Spiderman.

JOE

I'm not going to make you talk about Spiderman. We have a connection.

ALAN

You know my friend Tory won a Tony for *Kinky Boots*.

Cast pic from Kinky Boots

JON

Megan Hilty (*) came to *Drood* one night too.

Headshot of Megan Hilty

ALAN

My friend Shawn was the understudy to Simba in the Lion King on Broadway.

Pic of Simba from Lion King

JOE

From behind the bar it's like oh, there's Daphne Rubin Vega and Leslie Odom Jr. They met during *Smash*. (*)

Side-by-side shot of D.R.V and L.O.J

JESS

I worked a private party about 2 weeks ago. It was really privileged white women. It was like a scene for *The Real Housewives*. (*) Does that count?

*Pic of Real Housewives of New
Jersey*

SCOTT

I was a milk carton because Parmalat Milk, which is a non-refrigerated milk, came to the US and they had me dress up as a milk carton going around doing industrials. It was a freakin' nightmare. The costume was very bulky.

*Picture of cartoon milk carton with
Scott's face photoshopped on top*

JOE

I've been a promoter for wine and spirit tastings, like going to liquor stores or wine shops and pouring wine or liquor and being like "Hi! How are you doing today? We are having a wine tasting. Would you like to try a muscat or a nice cab?" And the way that it works, the company sends girls to the sports bars and guys to the gay bars. There's no crossover. That's the way it is. So I've gotten to work at all of New York City's gay bars, and it can be fun because you're giving out drinks. You get hit on a lot. I've been groped my fair share of times.

OPHELIA

I served for, um, I wanna say like about two years, and I had a table that

came in, they wanted to see a show. We were in restaurant row so we're like right in the theatre district. And it was 10 people, they wanted appetizers plus their entrees and a dessert, but they have like an hour and half which is not a lot of time for all of those people. They're like

ALAN (as they)

Ok, what would take the longest to make?

OPHELIA

Probably a well-done burger. If anything, don't get anything well-done. So I put in their appetizers, everything came out fine. Their entrees...one entrée is missing and I was like, oh my god I forgot her entrée. And I didn't wanna tell her, so I was like near the bottom of the stairs just pacing around the kitchen, and the kitchen guys were like

JOE (as kitchen guy)

What are you doing here?

OPHELIA

I need, I need a barbecue chicken platter, please, I need it really quickly. Is there anything you can do? So the woman was eating bread and then everybody else's food came out and hers didn't and she was like

JESS (as woman)

Where's my food?

OPHELIA

Oh it's taking a little bit of time. Don't worry. I'll be right on it. So my manager sees me pacing a he's like

SCOTT (as manager)

Why are you pacing?

OPHELIA

I forgot someone's food! So her food comes out finally but everybody's almost done with their food, so she freaks out. Absolutely flips out.

JESS (as woman)

No! How could you? You told me that this wouldn't take so long. You said it was only a well- done burger. You just forgot! I need to see the manager right now. Right now!

OPHELIA

So I get my manager and one guy at the table was like

ALAN (as one guy)

I'm a chef. How long does a well-done burger take? And barbecue chicken only takes 15 minutes, correct? If it's already done? So she lied. She's a liar. So she should just tell the truth next time. Not lie.

OPHELIA

So then my manager's like

SCOTT (as manager)

Alright, we'll just bring them out a platter of dessert to try to make them feel better.

JESS (as woman)

No, we have no time for this. We're just leaving.

OPHELIA

So the guy comes up to me at the end and he gives me my check and he was like

ALAN (as one guy)

You know, the tip would be more, just next time don't lie. Lying is not becoming on young ladies.

OPHELIA

That's exactly what he told me. I was just like "Thank you sir, have a nice day." Lying is not becoming on young ladies...But then I ate all the desserts and I felt way better.

JESS

Um, I think one of the weirdest things that I had to deal with was one

lady, it was like, I don't know, a Sunday night dinner. And this one lady came in and was like

OPHELIA (as lady)

I want red wine and the salad, but I don't want anything on it. I want...basically...I don't want anything on the salad. I want to create my own salad.

JESS

So my kitchen would do all that kind of stuff, so I went to ask, after she finished her wine, I went to offer her another. And she said

OPHELIA (as lady)

Um, I kind of want another one but...do you think I'm fat? Like, that has a lot of calories in it, right?

JESS

And I'm thinking, you're at a fucking restaurant. Like, why would you come out if you're going to be that picky about what you put in your body? I mean, just cook at home. It was really awkward because I didn't know what to say. Like No! No. I'm not going to insult you, you're tipping me! Are you kidding me?

SCOTT

I can't be a waiter. I hate people too much to be a fucking waiter. I just...it's hard to be a waiter. Ugh! And people aren't nice!

ALAN

I was serving a nice Asian couple, I think they were Japanese, and I found out it was the wife's birthday so I went to pour the wine, I walk away to grab the menus, I come back and I notice that she has a teddy bear with her glass and she's going like this:

*Spotlight on Jess feeding the wine to
a teddy bear.*

And I just kinda took it for granted; I was like maybe she's just wiping the

edge of the glass with the teddy bear? So I take the order and send amuse bouche for the first course. So when I drop the amuse bouche I notice the teddy bear has a bib on it. And I realize we're in a whole different ballgame.

OPHELIA

I used to be a choir director. I used to be a choir director for, um, a born again Christian in...it was Indian-based, so they were all Indian. There's another name for it, I just can't remember it. And I liked them but they were not too fond of me. The kids really like me 'cause I was a good time, but the parents didn't really like me too much because I wasn't Indian. They were very, like, you know, selective. They wanted to be their people, so they would speak their language in front of me...always.

ALAN

And through the four course meal she continued to share her food and drink to her teddy bear and act as if it was the most normal thing possible. Like, no, she wasn't acting all crazy. Grown woman in her 30s, and she had a lovely husband; and as much as I thought I'd seen it all at a restaurant, I felt like at a fine dining restaurant to have this experience was like wow. And it could be really sad. She might have lost a child or something, I don't know the answer, but I was just like itgetsbetter.org.

OPHELIA

And at one point I was like I'd prefer if everyone spoke English if I was in the room because that's what I would do. That didn't really go over too well so I wasn't asked back, but I mean, they wanted to win a competition. That's why I was hired, and they got pretty close but I just told them, I was like if you wanna win you need to rehearse. You need to practice. So they got 4th place. That's good 'cause one girl was tone deaf, so...

JOE

When I first moved to the city my job was working for a not-for-profit theatre company calling their past subscribers and offering them new subscriptions. Calling them between the hours of 5 and 9pm. "Hi! It's

your beloved theatre company. We wanted to offer you 3 shows for the price of one.” And you would either find people would be thrilled you had called

SCOTT (as subscriber)

Oh my god! I'd love to buy 3 shows for the price of one! What a great deal!

JOE

Or people would be so mad that you ever even thought to call them. Just yelling at you.

ALAN (as subscriber)

You've called me every day!

JOE

Sir, this is my first day on the job.

ALAN (as subscriber)

No, you've called here every day! I recognize your voice I know you. You've called me a lot.

JOE

I promise you I have never called this number before.

ALAN (as subscriber)

You're a liar.

JOE

And what you realize is that when people can't see you, they feel free to harass you in a way that you would not expect. Saying just awful things to you that you would never say to a person's face. And you want to calmly and clearly explain to them, like, I have your telephone number. I have your full name. I have your address. Sometimes I have your credit card information. I'm not saying you need to treat me like a prince, but I have a lot of power on this end of the phone. I would never abuse it, but there are people who might. Sometimes the people are so rude, it's like

you are just inviting identity theft.

JESS, OPHELIA, JOE, ALAN

Right now I feel like I have no money!

JESS

Well, that's all the time really. Especially these last couple of months, um, 'cause when I was working as a server it was fine but just the catering jobs are as sparse as the theatre jobs sometimes. I'm very lucky to be getting financial help from my parents so it hasn't been as hard as it could be. As much as I don't wanna ask them. Like, really don't.

JOE

That's one of the ways my parents have been the most supportive. They have supported me financially at times, because it's just...When I was first living in the city, I wasn't making money and so...and I would get down to the wire and I would have to suck up my pride and ask for help. And I haven't had to in a really long time and I'm really glad about that. But at the time it was like I'm failing. I can't make my bills. And I can't get a job doing what I'm supposed to be doing. Things are falling apart. And it feels bad because [long pause]. It's like you're an adult. You're out of college. You're living on your own, or you have a roommate depending on you to pick up half the tab. And if you're like

ALAN

I'm gonna give you this check for half the rent. Can I give you the rest next week?

JOE

That's a horrible question to ask. And. And there's. There's no option. Even though I am working from dawn to dusk and later. It's like. It's like I'm not...it's like I'm failing. And it makes you feel like [long pause] you're not done growing but you should be.

OPHELIA

Paying loans is always tough. I was supposed to do Passing Strange in P-town, got the gig, everything. They call me, everything is cool, so I had

to give my two weeks notice at my job. Then I didn't hear anything from them. Nothing. And they were like

SCOTT (as they)

Well, we're just having trouble because you're Equity. We're having trouble seeing if we can give an Equity contract.

OPHELIA

But I booked it, you know? And that's when I learned that you didn't book it until you sign something. So I'm just waiting to hear, waiting to hear, I already put in my two weeks notice. And I didn't wanna go back anyway, so...then come to find out I didn't get the job because they found somebody who was non-Equity who could do it. And I was heartbroken because I wanna do that show so bad and also, I mean, I just gave up my job. Like [breathes out]. It was terrible. So I didn't really save very much 'cause everything was going to my loans, so I had about 90 dollars to my name for about a month. And I wouldn't let my mom help me because my mom is taking care of me, my younger brother who was in school at the time, and sometimes my older brother 'cause he can be a deadbeat from time to time. And his four kids...but that's another story [laughs]. AND his...oh lord, anyway. So I just didn't feel right being like Ma, I need help. But she saw I was struggling so she gave me 300 bucks and I learned how to stretch that like nobody's business. I stretched it so hard until about April when I got my next job. January to April. So stressful. But that job wasn't making me happy anyway, and I feel like your side job should make you a little bit happy, you know? Like you shouldn't want to vomit every time you go, so...

JESS

I wouldn't do any type of office work whatsoever. I don't like to be in a very business oriented setting, although I'm sure it would be helpful if I were. But yeah, I don't know. I guess I wouldn't wanna be like a garbage man or something. Something really dirty.

OPHELIA

I would not strip. Would not strip. Would not. Um, I would not work at McDonald's. No fast food joints. I always thought it'd be really cool to be

a political analyst. Is that weird? I wanna be a judge. It'd be fun to be a pundit and rattle off things and wear a cute suit, you know. But I think through it all I'd start singing making my points, so maybe not. But really, I knew I wanted to be an actor when I was about 13 years old. I always knew I wanted to sing. I told my mom when I was about 2 or 3 that I wanted to be Whitney Houston.

*Projection of Whitney Houston
appears*

I was like I'm gonna be a singer,

*Generic stock photo of a "singer"
appears*

a judge

*Singer picture changes to a judge,
complete with wig, robe, gavel, etc.*

and a figure skater

Picture changes to a figure skater

'cause I wanted to be Kristi Yamaguchi (*) as well.

Picture changes to Kristi Yamaguchi

I always wanted to make entertaining a career. The idea of using your words and it's like you get so heightened in your emotion, all you can do was sing. It made so much more sense to me, so I'm thinking at that point I knew I wanted to make it a career. I never wanted to do anything else, I mean, except for the figure-skating judge thing.

*Picture changes to Ophelia as
Whitney Houston as a figure-skating
judge*

...however that can be accomplished.

JOE

I started doing shows when I was a kid and bit by bit realized it was a real job. Not just like hey, they're doing a show this summer community theatre style. But like oh wait, no, they like hire people to do this.

JESS, SCOTT, OPHELIA, ALAN

This is like a JOB.

JOE

Like once I realize that was an option, it's like oh yeah, I'll do that. That's who I am.

ALAN

I did *Odyssey of the Mind*, before it became *Destination Imagination*. So I did that starting in first grade and I did it every year, and by third grade I was doing this really funny character in a sketch and we did really well at regionals so we got to perform for our school, and I had the entire audience laughing and I was like, at that moment, I knew that I had to keep doing this.

JESS

I want to say it was when I did Annie when I was 12 at Tulane's summer theatre. I don't know...I guess it was this one guy that I was working with really inspired me to care about it and really believed in me. He was playing Rooster. He taught me everything I know about dance. I think after I did Annie and was working with him, I decided this was something, you know, more than just a hobby. Something that I loved and that was always enjoyable. I think the minute theatre becomes not fun or enjoyable anymore, that's when I'll give it up. That's what it's about.

JOE

I don't really know how to gauge lack of support. There's never...I don't...I don't think there has ever been anyone that discouraged me. I've been in for *Beauty and the Beast* tour a couple of times, usually going in for Gaston. The last time I went in, I did all the material several

times. And they were having all the Gastons stay to dance afterwards and I was the last one to audition. So I was like, if they want me to stay I have to know now. Like, they are walking in the room in 5 seconds. And so I'm pacing trying to figure out if I should get into my dance clothes, and the casting director comes out and is like

ALAN (as casting director)

You're good. You're done. You can go home.

JOE

What? I was in there for like 15, 20 minutes working on the material.

ALAN (as casting director)

Yeah

JOE

Now they've seen me dance before. Do they just not need to see me dance again? When you say I'm done, does that mean I'm not being considered for the role?

ALAN (as casting director)

They just don't think you're this part.

JOE

Was it my read on the scenes?

ALAN (as casting director)

No, they loved your read on the scenes. They thought you gave a great performance.

JOE

Ok, was it the song then? Are there different choices I can make in the song?

ALAN (as casting director)

No, they said that was the best they have ever heard the song sung. They don't really expect to hear the song sung better.

JOE

Ok, what is it? I...I need something here. I need to know why I can sing the song better than anyone else and read the sides better than anyone else and I'm still not right for the part.

ALAN (as casting director)

It's just...you're just...you're too pretty. When you do the part, it feels like Gaston is being played by the douche-y guy in an 80s movie.

Picture of douche-y 80s guy appears

JOE

That is the actual phrase that came out of his mouth. And I was like, I mean, one: I can't really process this right now. Two: I can't really change that. That's not a note I can take.

ALAN (as casting director)

No, it's not.

SCOTT

Several years ago, when I was called in for a replacement for a Broadway show, the song I had to prepare...I mean the notes were so through the ceiling and at 9am in the morning. Which is OK, I mean, I know it's my job. But I was so new to this. I was ready, prepared, to go in. There's probably 15, 20 people at the table. I'm still OK. The accompanist starts playing and I start singing. And the casting director, who I will not say her name, says in front of all of these people

OPHELIA (as casting director)

STOP!

SCOTT

Is everything OK?

OPHELIA (as casting director)

Are you even listening?

SCOTT

And I mean, oh my gosh. So when I get nervous I sweat, and I feel myself starting to sweat and I'm like, what do you mean?

OPHELIA (as casting director)

You don't hear any of the notes! You're so off key, you should be embarrassed.

SCOTT

Oh! Can I try it again?

OPHELIA (as casting director)

Sure.

SCOTT

And I do it again, and she stops me again.

OPHELIA (as casting director)

I want you to stand with the accompanist and he is going to plunk out the notes until you get them right.

SCOTT

And that was when I begged for the floor to open up and suck me down!

OPHELIA (as casting director)

You don't even know what you're doing.

SCOTT

And I was so naïve, I didn't even know how to respond. Do I leave? Do I yell back? Do I...and I was like [fake crying] "Oh my gosh! You're right. I'm so sorry." And I stood by the accompanist and he plunked it out for me. And finally I'm like OK, I'm ready.

OPHELIA (as casting director)

Are you sure? Because if you don't do it right this time you will not be asked to come back.

SCOTT

It was so mortifying. So mortifying. So anyway, I did it. Done.

ALAN

I did audition for Disney cruise line, or just Disney in general, and I think he told me I was too short. Which I'm confused because in the movie Aladdin's so short, and I'm 5'7. I mean obviously there is that age-old Broadway thing. Large stage so they want tall people you know. Mel Brooks, like in *The Producers*, I think they only wanted girls that were 5'11, and that's always very frustrating because I remember *Young Frankenstein* and they had height requirements too.

JOE (a la carnival worker)

You can only audition if you're this tall.

*Picture of a carnival worker with
Donald Duck Yard stick to measure
height for riding rides, you know?*

ALAN

Newsies, I'm the perfect height for, I look perfect for, and I can play it. I can't do the triple back flip into the fuerte turn, but I can play the character and tap. And I find that incredibly frustrating because in many respects I'm square peg round hole. I feel like, to look at me, a lot of people immediately assume I'm gonna be a high baritone because I am a smaller-statured person, and I have a very low bass-baritone voice and so immediately I think there's a disconnect from what their expectations are, um, [Alan's phone rings, but everyone checks their phone. Is it Broadway caling?...nope]. Sorry about that. I'll call them back. Um, so I think that I am constantly trying to overcome that and find a way to own...I realized the thing I can control is how well I can prepare for the role. And I know that there's a chance for me to identify with the material and show them and maybe prove them wrong that what they're looking for, what they think they're looking for, there can always be a concession to it and that's kind of my new outtake on it. I'm an incredibly positive person.

SCOTT

Well, I don't look my age thank goodness. But again, I think it comes more with getting older, you just don't think about it so much. I mean, I've been called in with guys that are much older and I've been in with guys who are much younger. But I think it's about the talent at the end of the day. And I really do believe that is true. And I feel like there is a time as actors where we come into ourselves. And you know, I used to get

ALAN

You don't look like your voice

SCOTT

Then as you get older it all sort of merges together at an intersection, so it's right. And you look like your voice and you're comfortably the right age range.

OPHELIA

The thing about it is like my family, they, they don't fully understand what I do. They kind of are just like

JESS (as family)

Oh, you know, you're doing that singing thing. Why don't you just be on *American Idol* or *The Voice*? (*)

OPHELIA

And I wanna vomit. And then I got a call from my uncle. Well, he's a family friend but we just call him my uncle. He's my brother's godfather. He calls me and he's like

JOE (as uncle)

You know Ophelia, you know it's getting to that point in your life where you gotta really focus on something.

OPHELIA

Errrr! What do you mean? I am focused on something. My career.

JOE (as uncle)

You know you're going on 28.

OPHELIA

I am not 28.

JOE (as uncle)

I just don't want you to be 40 and still working those random restaurant jobs.

OPHELIA

He said a lot of crazy stuff and it made me so mad because my, my dad just passed and he just decided this would be the perfect time to call me and let me know that maybe I should work, and he told me I should work in a museum possibly.

JOE (as uncle)

You could use acting that way, telling people about paintings.

OPHELIA

I don't know. He was trying to think of like creative things that I could do because clearly what I was doing was just not enough. Like he wants me to make money off of it and jolly gosh I wanna make money off of it too. Like come on!

SCOTT

Oh yeah, my oldest one especially, she's sixteen, and she cannot wait to tell me what she did and did not like.

JESS (as daughter)

You know dad, maybe next time when you do it you could be...

SCOTT

It doesn't work like that Alexis. It's locked in. I can't be a different anything. And it's funny because she takes voice lessons and I'm always listening outside the door. And I befriended the voice coach, of course. So I'll be like what are you working on?

JESS (as daughter)

Some, you know, "Matchmaker" or some other traditional Broadway song.

SCOTT

And I'll say maybe you oughtta try it like this. And my daughter gets so annoyed.

JESS (as daughter)

This is my lesson.

SCOTT

We can do a duet!

JESS (as daughter)

No. Dad, it's not like that.

SCOTT

Not like what? I know what it's like. I'm in it every day. You don't know what it's like. She won't act in any of the plays at school. She likes to keep it separate. And if I go with her to see her school's play, I'll want to talk to the kids after and she'll be like

JESS (as daughter)

Dad, don't say a word.

SCOTT

Alright. You know, as a parent you encourage your kids to do whatever their thing is and let it take them wherever it takes them. I don't discourage them from things. I only want them to try. They love the idea of what it is but, you know, like most kids they don't get that there's work. They just think you show up and you get a part. You gotta put your time in. Like even if it's at home, I'll be prepping for an audition for hours and days in another room and they don't get it.

JESS (as daughter)

Why are you singing it over and over?

SCOTT

[in a mock-scary voice] Because you have to! Don't ask me questions!

OPHELIA

My measure of success has definitely changed since I was young, since I finished school. I always thought the measure of success would be, you know, Broadway.

*Every time she says the word
"Broadway", a giant flashing light-up
sign of "BROADWAY" appears and
the company whispers "Broadway"*

That would be it. Like it's Broadway or bust, you know. So that was the goal, the goal was always Broadway and even in college I was like I'm gonna be on Broadway. And you never think if I got a degree that says I can sing and dance and act equally, why can't I use that in other ways versus just Broadway, you know? It's like if you're not doing Broadway or regional theatre, even regional theatre we didn't think of very much. Maybe the big ones that were like Broadway. It's like then I'm not, I'm not a performer. But as I've gotten older my measure of success has definitely changed where it's been like I wanna be able to perform and to be able to support myself in just performing. In any form or fashion. If it's just straight theatre or if it's just doing music or if I'm dancing in a gig, I think that is the measure of success. It's not really just about Broadway. I mean, it's the...it's the dream. It'd be nice to happen, but it's not...it's not the be all/end all anymore as it once was back in the day.

JESS

It used to be more about what other people thought, and I guess it still is in that regard but now it's, I've accepted that performing is a process and I just have to do it for me.

SCOTT

Umm, obviously my measure of success is booking the job. But getting the callback is always awesome. And I measure it for myself, it's when I leave the audition. Did I feel good about it? We have no idea what they're

thinking. Maybe I'm too tall? Which is never. Or whatever, the costume doesn't fit. But for myself I try to figure out what does and doesn't work.

ALAN

That's a really good question. I think, personally, I would like to be able to go from quality to quantity in some respects. But sometimes those little gems sustain your creative heart and your soul.

JOE

When you're doing a show, you think about 3 things: The quality of the show, the quality of the contract, and the quality of the role.

Throughout this section, Joe's points are illustrated by a very business-like PowerPoint. Excessive charts and graphs are encouraged.

And at least one of those things has to be good. It may be a bad show and a bad contract, but you have a good part and you can do it well. So you can suck up those other things. Or maybe you're not getting paid and it's not a good part, but it's a great show. Like you're waving a rose in the background, but you're waving a rose in the background of a show you really believe in. Or the money is great, the show is bad and the role is bad, but you are making some cash. One of those three things has to be in place. If all of those things are in place, that's great. That's a unicorn.

*The slide shows a math equation:
Money + show + role = a My Little
Pony unicorn.*

More often you have an ensemble part at a bad show, but you're making some money. Or you have a bad part and you're making no money, but it's a good show. Or it's a bad show...have I already done all three combinations?

SCOTT

I did something a few years ago, and it was one of those things where you're so covered. You're so in it that it feels like you are sort of hovering above it. Like, you just knew you were so in it. And that to me feels like oh, it all comes together. It was a play and I just felt like I was doing really good work. And it was definitely nice accolades, but I felt good about it. So that really made me feel proud.

OPHELIA

Made me feel proud to be a performer? [long pause] Let me see. The one that comes to mind is, it was my first summerstock gig and I was about a junior in college and I got my first like major role ever. I was so nervous and in summerstock you get like two weeks to put a show together and you kinda freak out. And then I remember opening night, going out on stage and just being like so enthralled by everything. And then also just improvising on stage, just being in that moment. I was like oh, all the stuff I learned in school I'm actually using and it makes sense. So that made me proud.

JOE

I did a brief workshop for part of *The Last Goodbye*. I mean it was so good. We were just doing three numbers from the show with different choreographers. But the bones of that show were so good and the spirit in the room was so creative and collaborative. I was so happy to be there and to be a part of it. Yeah, that was a good one.

ALAN

If you haven't performed for children before, it is probably the most rewarding job you'll ever have. And I know many actors that actually don't feel like they ever wanna do children's theatre. They might feel they're above it or it's just not for them 'cause they hate kids. I happen to love kids and some of the performances I got to do were their first experiences with live theatre ever and seeing that look on their faces was probably the most amazing experience.

JESS

I worked on this gig called *The Victory Belles* which was like an Andrews

Sisters show and they still do a bunch of performances up here, but we did this one event back in Louisiana for like a Veteran's Day experience. And just seeing the looks and how, how our singing affected the veterans and just made their day, um really touched me and it was always a compelling and wonderful experience to be able to move someone that way and like bring them back to a better time or a time that might have been hard for them. I don't know, it was a beautiful experience.

SCOTT

Nothing would stop me from performing.

JOE, JESS, OPHELIA, ALAN, SCOTT

It's what I do.

SCOTT

I think we all have this drive in us that we have to have it. We have to be around the same people. We love the energy that we all have. It's part of our DNA. It's what we are made to do, you know? And it feels right.

JESS

No, I don't think I'll ever stop completely. Even if I go back to school. I don't think so. Because it's like a drug. I have to, I have to be able to perform. It's such a big part of my life and my happiness so...no, I don't think I'll ever stop.

ALAN

I wanna be like Maggie Smith and Ian Mackellan (*) and I don't ever wanna retire.

OPHELIA

I think that this job is not for the faint of heart. You gotta be Army strong to do this. And all of the rejections and failures, like every time I feel really low and down on myself I just know that the ending is gonna be so much sweeter and mean so much more because of everything that I've been through. I always say, you know, when I'm on that couch with Jimmy Fallon (*) and he's asking me questions, I'm like I wanna

remember all of these so that, I want people to know it's possible. Like, success in this is possible and it doesn't come overnight. It's years and years of blood, sweat, and tears. And I got more years in me so I ain't gonna stop and I'm just gonna keep going. And that's it. Ta-da!

SCOTT

I will be in a show right down the street...the Broadway street, not on the 10th avenue street. I'm just saying that. No Naked Boys Singing (*). Well, look, I don't care. I gotta work. A girl gotta work! But yeah, that's where I see myself in 5 years.

ALAN

Sometimes I wonder if there's a dream role that hasn't even been written yet. That'll be my chance to define the role and people after me are gonna be like

JOE (as people)

Man I wish I could sing that low. I look like the part but I could never sing that low

ALAN

'Cause that would mean, like, I can't wait to start creating my own pathway. But I will never not go in for the audition. I feel like the sky's the limit. Go in, own it, and prove them wrong. That's how I feel.

JOE

Hopefully soon I'll be working a real theatre job. I don't want to bartend forever. I want to hang up that apron. I mean 5 years ago I wouldn't have imagined this is where I'd be. I had very different aspirations. Probably where I see myself 5 years from now is where I saw myself 5 years ago. I sort of have to just keep moving it down the line. You know those people who say

OPHELIA (as those people)

If I'm not this by the time I'm that, then I'm gonna give it up.

JESS (as those people)

I'm gonna go to grad school.

SCOTT (as those people)

I'm gonna move back home and teach.

ALAN (as those people)

If I haven't made it by this time in New York I'll move to LA. If I haven't made it by this time in LA, I'll give up.

JOE

You can't put those kinds of deadlines and time limits on yourself because so little of it is in your control. It's not like saying I wanna learn Spanish in 5 years. You can control that. You have to say, I want to be here in 5 years. But if I'm not, that's OK.

JESS

I see myself booking something huge that I don't even know what it is yet. I hope to see myself on Broadway one day, even if it is some crazy small part and just, just live that for a second and take that in. That's what I really want. That's what I hope is in the future, but I really don't know. Where do I actually see myself? Um, I see myself back in New Orleans...for sure. I feel like I belong back in New Orleans. It's my home and I miss it terribly. But I see myself being a successful doctor. I don't know what kind of doctor, maybe a cardiologist. Maybe an ENT. Maybe even a general practitioner because I think they get more financial aid nowadays anyway. That's what I see in my future. I don't wanna believe that that's my future, but I think...yeah.

*Sound cue: applause A video clip of
Jimmy Fallon saying "Thanks for
being here"(*) plays*

OPHELIA

It was a pleasure, Jimmy (*). And I really mean it. I hope I've inspired somebody out there to keep trying. To not give up. Hell, if I can do it, I mean, come on.

*Sound cue: applause segue into
sounds of busy medical office*

JESS

Sorry I went on and on about that. As far as registration, do you need any more paperwork from me?

*Sound cue: "All 1st year residents
report to the nurse's station for
orientation"*

Jess stands, puts on white coat

SCOTT

So yeah, I've been Alexis's number one fan from the start. I'm sure you don't wanna hear a proud dad just babble on and on, but it's Broadway! And it's my baby!

Lights flash like "intermission"

Oh my god, you're gonna fucking love the second act.

*Sound cue: cocktail lounge music
with rumble of conversation, glasses
clinking*

JOE

So that's where I'm at. You want another? On the rocks, right?

*Sound cue: 'I'd like to line up my
11:15 appointments'*

ALAN

Oh, that's me. It was really great talking to you. This casting director is so nice so don't even worry about it. Just break legs and maybe I'll see you at the next one.

He stands, headshot resume in hand. Blackout.

End of Play.

SUGGESTED CITATION

Moore, C. E. & Whorton, R. T. (2019). *My other job*. *ArtsPraxis*, 5 (1), 136-189.

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Cali Elizabeth Moore is a professional actress/writer in New York City. Appearing in a number of films and television shows including *Broad City*, *30 Rock*, *The Shvitzing*, and currently shooting the TV pilot *Fairwood*. Cali enjoys the hustle and bustle life of an actor in the city. With a love for all forms of acting, Cali has also been in various musicals including the Off-Broadway hit *The Bardy Bunch* and *Beulah Land*, making its world premiere in August 2019. And for her work as Abigail Marston in *Red Dead Redemption 2*, Cali was nominated for "Best Character in a Video Game" at the NY Game Awards. As a writer, Cali co-wrote the awards winning plays *Through the Glade* and *My Other Job* that both debuted at festivals in NYC. *Words on a Page*, Cali's monologue book, was published in 2009 and can be found on Amazon.

Rachel Tuggle Whorton is a performer, director, writer, and arts educator who has enjoyed collaborating with groups across the country, including Royal Caribbean International, National YoungArts Foundation, San Diego Musical Theatre, Blindspot Collective, The Acappella Company, Playwrights Horizons, The New School, SITl Company, CO/LAB Theatre Group, Looking for Shakespeare, Havas Luxe Events, Life Jacket Theatre Co., Verbatim Performance Lab, and New York City Center. Her recent Off-Broadway performance, *Her Opponent*, was featured in *The New York Times*, *The Hollywood Reporter*, and on *MSNBC*. Rachel holds a Ph.D. from NYU Steinhardt, where she has served as an adjunct instructor, student teacher supervisor, and music director. She has published articles in *RiDE: The Journal of Applied Theatre and Performance* and *Teaching Artist Journal*.