

MASTERCLASSES

**The Morley Buck School of Serious Acting
for Extraordinary Actor**

Cast of Characters

MORLEY BUCK

CHERYL

BILLY

ASSISTANT

CORA MERRIWEATHER

BETHANY

FREDDY

QUENTIN FORRESTER

BERNADETTE

KIM

PAT COFFEE

MEL

RACHEL

JACKIE TRAMMEL

OLIVER BERNARD BLAKE

PAUL

NINA

ROZ

BURT DARLINGTON

NORA

ELISSA

JASON

KAT

DONALD HEMSWORTH

MISY

TAYLOR

JASMINE DEMPSEY

ZACH

STUDENTS

PROLOGUE:

MORLEY, CHERY, BILLY, ASSISTANT

CLASS ONE:

CORA, BETHANY, FREDDY, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, STUDENTS

CLASS TWO:

QUENTIN, KIM, BERNADETTE, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, ASSISTANT, STUDENTS

CLASS THREE:

PAT, MEL, RACHEL, MORELY, CHERYL, STUDENT

CLASS FOUR:

JACKIE, MORLEY, CHERYL, STUDENTS

CLASS FIVE:

OLIVER, PAUL, NINA, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, ASSISTANT

CLASS SIX:

MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, ROZ, STUDENTS,

CLASS SEVEN:

BURT, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, NORA, STUDENTS

CLASS EIGHT:

ELISSA, JASON, KAT, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, STUDENTS

CLASS NINE:

DONALD, MISY, TAYLOR, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, STUDENTS

CLASS TEN:

JASMINE, ZACH, MORLEY, CHERYL, BILLY, ASSISTANT, STUDENTS

Prologue

(Spotlight up on MORLEY BUCK. He wears a black turtleneck, and maybe a cape.)

MORLEY: So...your child wants to become an actor. Well, you've come to the right place. I think we can help little Jiminy here become one the finest actors this world has ever seen.

(Lights up and standing near MORLEY are CHERYL and BILLY.)

CHERYL: Uh...what? No, my son Billy just needs to use the restroom. We're driving to my sister's place in Hertford, and—

MORLEY: Okay, so little Jimothy needs to use the facilities, and you... *(He makes some sort of hand gesture to indicate that he expects her to say something.)*

CHERYL: Uh... Cheryl...

MORLEY: And you, Cheryl, want to become an actor? We'll have to change your name, of course, but that's okay. I'm confident that we can make a performer out of you.

CHERYL: No, no, I own a crafts store, over in—

MORLEY: Acting is the most dangerous of crafts.

CHERYL: Excuse me?

MORLEY: It's also the most intricate and the most sublime.

CHERYL: I... I don't understand.

MORLEY: *(Laughs...a bit too long.)* That's quite alright. I wouldn't expect a Cheryl to understand. But you are in luck. With some dedication. A bit of gumption. A dash of moxie. And for one-ninety-nine-ninety-nine per week, you will not be a Cheryl for much longer. At The Morley Buck School of Serious Acting for Extraordinary Actors we don't deal in Cheryls, or Jeffs, or Sarahs, or Davids.

(An ASSISTANT enters and approaches MORLEY.)

BILLY: Mommy, I really have to go...

CHERYL: Please, my son just needs to use the restroom.

(MORLEY does some elaborate hand gesture and sound to silence CHERYL. The ASSISTANT whispers into MORLEY's ear.)

MORLEY: *(Reacting to the ASSISTANT:)* Yes... Good... Excellent... Terrible... Mercury... Selena Gomez... No kiwis... The Golden Girls... France is a state of mind... Don't call her Mother... Good... Never...

(The ASSISTANT bows ever so slightly, backs away, and exits.)

MORLEY: Cheryl, little Gulliver, what you need awaits you... Right this way.

CHERYL: Thank you. Come on, Billy.

(MORLEY leads them off.)

Class One: Startled Awake

(We are in the classroom of CORA MERRIWEATHER. There are three chairs side by side facing downstage. Her students are fanned out around the chairs, sitting on the floor. CORA paces in front of the chairs.)

CORA: In dreams, we are our full selves. Do you see?

(The STUDENTS all nod enthusiastically.)

CORA: In being our full selves, there is no other world. Do you see?

(Again, the STUDENTS nod.)

CORA: If the world were to come crashing down right now, who among us would not be terrified?
Who would not call out in anguish and despair?

(The STUDENTS look at each other, unsure of the correct answer.)

CORA: Bethany. You're up.

(BETHANY bounces up. She takes a breath. She shakes out her limbs.)

CORA: Prepare your slumber.

(BETHANY lays down across the chairs.)

CORA: Enter your slumber.

(BETHANY closes her eyes and "sleeps."

CORA slowly walks around the chairs.)

CORA: Fire engine siren outside!

(BETHANY "wakes up" abruptly, breathing heavily. Maybe she pretends to look out a win- dow.)

CORA: Stop. Bethany, where is this bed?

BETHANY: It's uh...in an apartment in a city.

CORA: And how long have you lived in this apartment in a city?

BETHANY: Um...four years?

CORA: Four years... Four years... You've lived in a city for four years and the sound of a fire engine startles you that much? No, no, no, no, no.

(CORA waves BETHANY off of the chairs. BETHANY gets up and joins the other students. CORA lays down on the chairs. She closes her eyes.)

CORA: *(Softly:)* Fire engine siren outside...

(CORA performs waking up from the sound... She doesn't pop up. She opens an eye and maybe rolls over and mimes putting a pillow on her head. After she is done, she takes a moment and stands.)

CORA: Do you see?

(All of the STUDENTS nod.)

CORA: You've lived here for years. The siren is an annoyance. You see, this class is called Startled Awake. Is it about the shattering of dreams, yes, but it is also about the realities of the waking world. Do you see?

(The STUDENTS nod.)

CORA: Freddy, you're up. Prepare your slumber.

(FREDDY stands up and goes over to the chairs. He lies down.)

CORA: Enter your slumber.

(FREDDY closes his eyes. CORA walks around the chairs once...twice...)

CORA: A cat jumps on your chest!

(FREDDY reacts to a cat jumping on his chest. It's a bit of a muted reaction.)

CORA: All wrong, Freddy. All wrong.

FREDDY: I... *(He sighs.)*

CORA: Do you own a cat?

FREDDY: No.

CORA: So you are deep in a peaceful sleep and a strange cat has landed on your chest and that was all you could muster?

(CORA waves FREDDY away. FREDDY gets up and rejoins the STUDENTS.)

CORA: To be startled awake we must first...

STUDENTS: Be truly asleep.

CORA: Freddy, you need to work on truthful slumber. We've talked about this.

FREDDY: Yes, Ms. Merriweather.

(CORA goes to the chairs and lays down.)

CORA: *(Softly:)* A cat jumps on your chest...

(CORA performs being startled awake by a strange cat jumping on her chest. It's a big reaction. Maybe she mimes throwing the cat.

There is clapping from offstage [or wherever MORLEY is] and the STUDENTS join in clapping.

MORLEY approaches, ushering CHERYL and BILLY with him.)

MORLEY: Wonderful. Simply wonderful.

CORA: Morley, my darling, to what do I owe this unexpected visit?

MORLEY: I'm giving a tour of our illustrious school.

CHERYL: Actually, we're just looking for the restroom. My son, he—

CORA: The restroom?

(CORA and MORLEY enjoy a laugh that goes on too long. Maybe some of the STUDENTS also laugh.)

CHERYL: Do you not have a restroom?

MORLEY: *(Abruptly stops laughing.)* This is an acting school for actors and actors never rest.

CORA: Yet they must slumber, truthfully.

CHERYL: You must have to go sometime...

BILLY: I really gotta go.

MORLEY: Then you are at the right place, my boy. Right this way. Cora, as you were...

CORA: Students rise!

(All of the STUDENTS are up.)

CORA: Sleepwalking exercise. Eyes closed. Find your slumber. Begin.

(The STUDENTS, as they exit the stage, all have their eyes closed and are bumping into each other. MORLEY leads CHERYL and BILLY across the stage. The next class enters.)

Class Two: Gotta Go!

(The teacher, QUENTIN FORRESTER, stands center stage in front of the chairs. There are two STUDENTS on either side of him and other STUDENTS sitting on the ground around him.)

QUENTIN: Bernadette, you are applying for a position at a restaurant. Kim, you are the manager of the restaurant. You really have to go to the bathroom, but Bernadette is the owner of the restaurant's niece, so you can't rush her off. Begin.

BERNADETTE: I've been a dishwasher, a baker, a sous-chef, and a head chef...but not professionally...just at my parents' house.

KIM: So you have no real experience?

BERNADETTE: Not "real" real, but I can cook. I can list all of the dishes I can cook if you want.

KIM: No, no, that's okay.

BERNADETTE: I can make PB&J, I make a mean tuna melt, I make this one pasta dish that I like. I call it Pasta Bernadette. It's mainly just pasta and butter, because I don't like sauces, but I make the pasta just right...

KIM: That's great, no I don't need to know any more, I think—

BERNADETTE: Oh, and I make cookies too, but not from scratch. I get those tubes of cookie dough, and though I sometimes just eat the dough raw, when there is some left over, I pop it in the oven. I'm working on a method to make one giant cookie with leftover dough, but I keep burning the edges...

KIM: Yeah, that's great, it sounds like you have a real passion for food. I think you'll fit in nicely. You can start—

BERNADETTE: Okay, but I want to make sure that you are hiring me because of merit and not because my aunt owns this place.

KIM: It's merit. It's merit. Trust me. I have an eye for talent.

BERNADETTE: Okay, because actually, I do have some limited "professional" experience in my aunt's other two restaurants, but I probably shouldn't mention those because at one of them I set the kitchen on fire and was fired after the first day, and at the other I may have caused a bit of a flood on my second day, so...

KIM: Well, third time's a charm...

BERNADETTE: It's a funny story about the flood though. I was washing the dishes, and—

KIM: I really don't want to talk about a flood right now—

BERNADETTE: Oh, but it's really funny. The water damage was not funny, and the way it flowed into the dining room was—

KIM: Please stop.

BERNADETTE: Ironically, the bathrooms were the only places not damaged—

KIM: You're hired! Now, I have to go, and—

QUENTIN: And scene! Wonderful work, both of you. Kim, your facial tension was spot-on. The way you spoke through your teeth felt honest and really drew me into your plight. The subtle ways in which you shifted your weight indicated that you really needed to go, but that you didn't want to let on to Bernadette. And finally, the way the pacing of your dialogue quickened as the situation became more desperate was so revealing. I felt for you in those moments. And that's really what we're searching for in Gotta Go...how do we use our natural needs to convey more about our characters.

(MORLEY steps forward with CHERYL and BILLY.)

MORLEY: Well said, Quentin, well said. I apologize for the interruption, but I have with me a young person who is very interested in your class. *(To BILLY:)* Go ahead, Zippy, say hello.

BILLY: *(Looks to his mom, and then to QUENTIN.)* Uh...hi... I'm Billy... I, uh... I really need to...uh—

(The ASSISTANT appears, but does not approach the group yet.)

QUENTIN: My goodness! What a performance. Your discomfort is stunning. You're a natural.

CHERYL: Oh, well, he actually really does just have to go to the restroom.

(The ASSISTANT goes to MORLEY and whispers in his ear.)

MORLEY: *(Responding to the ASSISTANT:)* Yes... Okay... All you can eat shrimp... Use the Swiss Army knife on my desk... Okay... Never... He's a loathsome fool, but he's my brother... Wonderful... Oh, sure... I guess you can take him to the facilities... Charlene, my assistant will direct little Chippy here to the facilities while you continue on the tour.

CHERYL: Again, it's Billy and I'm not really here for a tour, we just stopped in—

BILLY: Can I just go, Mom?

(The ASSISTANT leads BILLY away.)

CHERYL: Okay, but I don't mind just waiting here...

MORLEY: There is so much more to see. Off we go...

(MORLEY leads CHERYL off in one direction. The STUDENTS and QUENTIN head off in the other direction.)

QUENTIN: *(As he is exiting:)* I hope you all were taking notes. What you just witnessed was the Dance of Desperation in its purest form. Simply marvelous.

(The STUDENTS nod enthusiastically as they exit.)

Class Three: Laughter Colon Laughing

(The STUDENTS all stand in a line facing downstage. Walking in front of the students is PAT COFFEE, their teacher. She is in all-black clothing. PAT walks down the line of students, stopping at each one.)

PAT: Muffled chuckle at a funeral.

(The first STUDENT attempts PAT's prompt.)

PAT: I said the funeral, not the wake.

(PAT moves on to the next STUDENT.)

PAT: Your grandmother slips on a banana peel and falls.

(The STUDENT hesitates.)

PAT: Do it! Now!

(The STUDENT attempts to act out the prompt.)

PAT: That's how you react to your grandmother falling? With that much joy? It is in our nature to laugh at people who slip on banana peels, even monkeys do it. But hilarity's sister is horror. Once you realize it's your grandmother, there is a shift. Hilarity to horror. Hilarity to horror. In between is our humanity. Find it or get out of my class.

(The STUDENT hangs his head. PAT moves on to the next STUDENT.)

PAT: You won the lottery.

(The STUDENT immediately lets out a joyous laugh.)

PAT: Shirley Jackson's "The Lottery," you fool! I seek the laughter of someone facing an absurd death.

(PAT is about to move on, but the student, MEL, steps forward.)

MEL: Let me try again.

PAT: Proceed.

(MEL makes another attempt—the laugh of someone facing an absurd death.)

PAT: What is your name?

MEL: Mel.

PAT: Good, you know your name. Do you know the name of this class?

MEL: Laughter.

PAT: Laughter? You think this class is simply called laughter?

MEL: Laughter... Laughing.

(PAT gets in MEL's face.)

PAT: Laughter Colon Laughing. Say it.

MEL: Laughter Colon Laughing.

PAT: And why is it called Laughter Colon Laughing?

(Another student steps forward, RACHEL.)

RACHEL: I know!

PAT: No one asked you, Rachel!

(RACHEL steps back.)

MEL: It's because...because...

PAT: Because laughter comes from within. It carries the mess inside of us and brings it out. We are not pretty when we are laughing. We are naked and ageless. Do you understand?

MEL: Yes, I do.

PAT: You do not understand! Laughter is love. Laughter is pain. Laughter is fear and joy and misery and balloon animals and clever memes and death. It is death, Mel. Death! Observe.

(PAT takes a step away from the STUDENTS. She gathers herself and begins.)

PAT: Muffled chuckle at a funeral. *(She performs.)* Grandmother slips on a banana peel and falls. *(She performs.)* Winning Shirley Jackson's "Lottery." *(She performs.)* And finally, realizing your students will always disappoint you. *(She performs.)*

(Clapping from offstage. MORLEY enters with CHERYL.)

MORLEY: Cheryl, may I present to you the world's most talented performer of laughter, Ms. Pat Coffee. Fun fact, she can laugh in seventeen different languages.

CHERYL: You can laugh in different languages?

(PAT and MORLEY look at each other and burst out laughing. PAT abruptly stops.)

PAT: That was the laughter of someone mortified by the ignorance of their fellow humans...in Greek.

RACHEL: I knew it was Greek.

PAT: No one asked you, Rachel!

MORLEY: We must be moving on. Cheryl is thinking of joining our school.

PAT: Isn't that a laugh.

CHERYL: I'm actually just here with my son. He needed to—

MORLEY: We'll leave you to it, Pat.

(MORLEY leads CHERYL off.)

PAT and the STUDENTS head off in the other direction.)

PAT: *(As they are heading off:)* Now, I want everyone to laugh at their saddest memory.

(The STUDENTS all laugh in bizarre ways as they head off.)

Class Four: Motion Capture Monstering

(A STUDENT comes charging on stage acting wild, like a gorilla. If possible, they can be in one of those full-body jumpsuits with the little balls attached that they use in movies to shoot motion capture scenes. The STUDENT pounds their chest.)

JACKIE TRAMMÉL enters. Maybe she is in some sort of lion tamer outfit. JACKIE is followed by some STUDENTS, who are taking notes/observing.)

JACKIE: That's great. That's good. You're a gorilla and you're so mad. This is your territory.

(The WILD STUDENT charges over to the group of STUDENTS and pounds on her chest.)

JACKIE: Amazing. I love it. Now show me a T-Rex.

(The WILD STUDENT shifts from gorilla to a T-Rex, tucking in her arms and sticking out her neck.)

JACKIE: This is not their park. This is your park. Show them.

(The WILD STUDENT rushes the other STUDENTS and lets out her best T-Rex roar.)

JACKIE: Brilliant. So scary. I love it. Don't let them stay in your park.

(The WILD STUDENT lets out an even louder roar. She chases the other STUDENTS around the stage.)

MORLEY enters with CHERYL and BILLY.)

MORLEY: Whoops. Looks like we have stumbled up on a...looks like dinosaur loose in a prehistoric park.

CHERYL: Interesting.

MORLEY: Motion Capture Monsters is one of our most popular classes. At this point, if you're going to be an actor, you need to be comfortable doing most of your work against a greenscreen, acting with someone in a jumpsuit covered in little balls.

(The WILD STUDENT roars again.)

MORLEY: We'll let them get back to it.

JACKIE: Sorry, T-Rex, the dinos have all been captured. But lucky for you, you've gotten a job as a talking slug in a new Pixar film.

(The WILD STUDENT stops. Thinks for a second. She drops to the ground and begins to wiggle on the floor.)

JACKIE: That's right little slug. Go save your bug friends!

(JACKIE and the STUDENTS exit. The WILD STUDENT slowly slithers off stage.)

Class Four: You've Been Stabbed, Now What?

(A student, PAUL, is on the floor, screaming as other STUDENTS around him watch without any sense of urgency. The teacher, OLIVER BERNARD BLAKE, is also looking on.

After a moment, PAUL stops screaming.)

OLIVER: Okay, okay. Paul, get up.

(PAUL stands up.)

OLIVER: I have no issue with your realization of the pain. I believe that the removing of the arrow from your stomach really hurt you. I felt your pain. I really did. But here's the thing, Paul, have you ever tried to remove an arrow from your stomach? *(He waits.)* Seriously, have you?

PAUL: Uh... Well, no... I've never actually been shot with an arrow.

OLIVER: Well, good for you. I can tell you, they are not that easy to take out. They are designed to go in easily, but coming out it's a different story. Nina, shoot me with an arrow.

(One of the other students, NINA, steps forward.)

NINA: Crossbow, or standard.

OLIVER: Surprise me.

(NINA mimes getting a bow ready. She mimes taking an arrow from a quiver and readies her bow. She fires. A direct hit. OLIVER goes down.

OLIVER is in the zone. To him, he has been hit [again?] with a real arrow. He is trying to hold it together. He grabs the imaginary arrow. He braces himself. He tugs at it, but it sticks, he reacts audibly, but tries to hold it together. He attempts again, and again the arrow is stuck inside of him. He collapses a bit, but quickly regains some composure. He tries for a final time and the arrow comes out. His anguish is loud, but brief. He collapses.)

(The class bursts into applause. OLIVER slowly gets up and waves off the applause.)

OLIVER: Getting stabbed, or shot with an arrow, or taking an axe to the back is the easy part. It's what comes after that separates the real actors from the battle scene extras. When I was in *Game of Thrones* and I died in the Battle of Blackwater Bay, to the untrained eye it would appear that I died from an arrow wound. In reality, I died of hubris. My character felt that he alone could win the battle, and to do so he would have to remove the arrow and fight on, but it was the removal of the arrow that truly did him in. Of course, when HBO will only give you 1.7 seconds of screen time, it's tough to convey all of that. But's that's Hollywood. No one appreciates art there.

(MORLEY steps forward with CHERYL.)

MORLEY: They may not, but I certainly do. In my opinion, your performance was the highlight of that show. It's why I hired you to teach, *You've Been Stabbed, Now What?*

OLIVER: Thanks, Morley. I am forever grateful.

MORLEY: Cheryl, would you like to take a crack at getting stabbed.

CHERYL: Um, no. No, thank you. I just want my son back.

(The ASSISTANT comes on with BILLY.)

CHERYL: Oh, there you are. All set?

BILLY: Yup. I feel great!

CHERYL: I guess we'll be going now.

(MORLEY holds up a finger to tell CHERYL to hold on. The ASSISTANT whispers into MORLEY's ear.)

MORLEY: *(Responding to the ASSISTANT:)* Okay... Yes... Red grapes, not green... The capital of Vermont is Montpelier... My favorite month is January, but only in Bermuda... Yes... No... Sometimes... Medium rare... Thanks...

(The ASSISTANT heads off.)

MORLEY: I guess you could go now, Cheryl, but then you'll miss out on the lasers.

BILLY: Did you say lasers?

MORLEY: I most certainly did. In this age of sci-fi and big budget action films, all great actors must know how to perform with lasers. The next class I was going to show you is called B.E.A.M—Being Electronically Assaulted by Machines.

BILLY: That sounds awesome.

MORLEY: That's because it is awesome.

BILLY: Mom, can we?

CHERYL: I don't know. We should be going.

BILLY: Please!

CHERYL: Okay, but then we go.

MORLEY: Right this way.

(MORLEY begins to head off, but before he does, he quickly turns around and fires an imaginary ninja star at OLIVER.)

MORLEY: *(He fires:)* Ninja star!

(Without missing a beat, OLIVER reacts to getting hit in the chest with the ninja star.)

MORLEY: He really is the best.

(MORLEY leads CHERYL and BILLY off.)

OLIVER performs removing the star, and then transitions into talking to the class as they all exit.)

OLIVER: Vampires are still in. I want you all practicing wooden wounds before next week.

(OLIVER and the STUDENTS exit.)

Class Five: B.E.A.M.

(MORLEY enters with CHERYL and BILLY. The stage, aside from the three chairs, is empty.)

MORLEY: That's strange. The B.E.A.M. class should be here right now.

(A STUDENT darts onto the stage and hides behind the chairs. The STUDENT waves to someone offstage indicating that they should join her behind the chairs. Another STUDENT runs on and hides beside the first STUDENT.)

MORLEY: Oh, I see...

(The two STUDENTS stand and...)

ROZ: *(From offstage:)* Energy canon!

(The two STUDENTS immediately drop to the ground and writhe in pain from being hit by the imaginary laser canon.

ROZ DANIELS, who probably has wild hair, comes on.)

ROZ: Okay, everyone, you can come out.

(The rest of the STUDENTS come on and join the writhing victims of the laser canon, who have finally stopped writhing.)

ROZ: That is some excellent writhing, you two. Just remember, with an energy canon, you are probably going to fall back a few feet before writhing on the ground. *(Noticing MORLEY and the rest:)* Oh, Morley, what are you doing here?

MORLEY: I come with an aspiring young actor who is interested in your class.

CHERYL: No, no, my son is not interested in being an actor. He wants to be a scientist.

MORLEY: Do you want to shoot lasers, young fellow?

BILLY: I sure do.

MORLEY: Do you know any scientists who shoot lasers?

BILLY: I... I don't know...

CHERYL: There wouldn't be lasers without scien—

MORLEY: Actors get to shoot lasers all of the time... At aliens, at robots, you name it.

BILLY: Wow!

ROZ: Any actors can shoot a laser, kid, but it takes a pro to know how to take a hit from a genuine RZ313 Energy Canon.

CHERYL: That's not a real thing. You're just making—

ROZ: It's real enough for the inhabitants of the moon of Trappist-1e who are locked in a life-and-death battle with the Vselkaries, a ruthless alien species.

CHERYL: None of that is real!

ROZ: Tell that to the millions of fans!

MORLEY: Okay, okay, settle down. Roz Daniels worked on the show. It's close to her heart.

ROZ: But the writers, they just didn't understand. *Trappist Moon* wasn't just a show, it was a way of looking at life, at the meaning of everything. They didn't understand!

MORLEY: That's enough, Roz!

ROZ: I'm sorry. I'm sorry.

MORLEY: You think you can show this kid how it's done on *Trappist Moon*?

ROZ: I sure can.

(ROZ walks over to BILLY. She mimes handing him a large...energy canon.)

ROZ: You think you can handle this, kid.

BILLY: I sure can.

CHERYL: I don't really approve of any of this.

ROZ: It's okay, ma'am, I'm a trained professional. Go ahead, kid. Hit me.

(BILLY mimes firing the energy canon. ROZ is hit and lunges back. She hits the ground and writhes in immense pain. It sure is a committed performance. Finally, she perishes.)

MORLEY: *(To BILLY:)* Great job, Archie. You're gonna make a great actor someday.

CHERYL: He certainly will not. I think it's time we got going, *Billy*.

MORLEY: Fair enough. The thespian arts are not for everyone. I'll escort you out. Follow me.

BILLY: *(Holding up the invisible energy canon:)* What do I do with this?

ROZ: *(Still on the ground. Picks her head up:)* Keep it, kid.

(ROZ drops her head to the ground.)

CHERYL: Nope.

(CHERYL takes the invisible energy canon and throws it aside.)

BILLY: Awww, Mom...

CHERYL: Let's go.

(MORLEY leads CHERYL and BILLY off.

The STUDENTS help ROZ off. It could be funny if she is so committed that they have to carry her off completely, but it's not necessary.

Class Six: Running Scared

(A STUDENT runs from one end of the stage to the other, screaming.)

(After a moment, another STUDENT runs from one end of the stage to the other, also screaming.)

BURT DARLINGTON comes out.)

BURT: Okay, gather 'round.

(The STUDENTS, including the ones who just ran across the stage, gather around BURT.)

BURT: The reason I teach Running Scared is because I believe that fear is not a monolith. The directive I gave to both of you was run from a tornado. But what I saw is two people running from a tsunami. You had the running and the screaming part down, but this is a tornado. Things are whipping around everywhere. You need to be ducking and diving...like this...

(BURT demonstrates running from a tornado. He ducks and moves side to side as he runs and screams. When he is finished, the STUDENTS clap and BURT returns to the group.)

MORLEY enters with CHERYL and BILLY.)

BURT: Hello, Morley. Visitors?

MORLEY: Yes, on a tour actually.

CHERYL: We're actually trying to—

BURT: Well, you're in luck. We're about to practice running from a giant monster who is attacking the city. This is a group exercise. Students, please get ready. You're all going about your day.

(The STUDENTS quickly begin doing mundane things—maybe a couple sit on the chairs and chat. They can stroll, or read a paper, etc.)

BURT: And from over here *(He points)*, a terrifying monster crashes through a building!

(The STUDENTS panic and run around the stage in fear, screaming.)

BURT: Don't forget to look over your shoulder at your imminent doom.

(The STUDENTS continue to run and scream.)

BURT: Great job. Wonderful work, everyone.

(One student, NORA, continues to scream and run.)

NORA: There's a monster!

BURT: Nora, we're done... Nora...

(But NORA either doesn't hear, or she is just in the zone.)

BURT: Nora!

NORA: Run for your lives!

(NORA races off the stage and into the audience, screaming the whole way.)

MORLEY: Wow. What a performer!

BURT: She's one of our best.

MORLEY: Thanks for the demonstration, Burt.

(BURT offers a little bow. MORLEY leads CHERYL and BILLY off.)

BURT: Okay, anyone up for a game of zombie apocalypse?

*(The STUDENTS all react enthusiastically. BURT
and the STUDENTS head off.)*

BURT: Today I think we'll go with fast zombies. They're more exciting.

(BURT and the STUDENTS exit.)

Class Six: Underwater Thinking / Exquisite Corpse / Montaging

(Across the stage three classes are happening simultaneously.

In the first, a teacher, ELISSA, is working with a STUDENT who is sitting on the floor, silent, thinking. In the second, a teacher, JASON, is working with a STUDENT who is laid out across the chairs. In the third, a teacher, KAT, is working with a STUDENT who is doing various exercises—jumping jacks, push-ups, etc.)

ELISSA: *(To her STUDENT:)* I can see you are deep in thought pondering your life choices, but I don't believe you are underwater. You need to flow.

(ELISSA moves as if she is underwater. Her STUDENT moves in the same way.)

JASON: It's not enough to simply not breathe. If you want to be the dead, you need to understand the life that came before the death. Try again.

(The STUDENT continues to lay motionless. JASON watches them closely.)

JASON: Much better.

KAT: Jumping jacks.

(The STUDENT quickly shifts from whatever they were doing before to doing jumping jacks.)

KAT: A delightful dinner with your best friend.

(The STUDENT quickly shifts from jumping jacks to miming having a delightful dinner.)

KAT: Taking a written exam, and failing.

(The STUDENT shifts from the dinner to taking a written test and failing. MORLEY leads CHERYL and BILLY on.)

MORLEY: Right this way. We are almost at the exit.

BILLY: What classes are these?

CHERYL: We don't need to know. We can just go.

MORLEY: Little Sammy here is curious. You don't want to stifle that.

CHERYL: His name is Billy!

MORLEY: But it doesn't have to be.

(CHERYL shakes throws up her arms in frustration.)

MORLEY: *(To BILLY:)* You know those scenes where the main character ends up sitting in a pool of water and they contemplate their life?

BILLY: No.

MORLEY: Well, it happens a lot in indie films, and Elissa specializes in teaching Underwater Thinking. Over here we have Jason, who teaches Exquisite Corpse. People think playing a dead

body is easy, but let me tell you, it's not. Jason is the best in the world at teaching people to be honestly dead.

BILLY: What are they doing?

MORLEY: Kat teaches montaging, which is the art of acting a series of quick scenes in succession.

BILLY: Cool.

CHERYL: It is not cool. And we must be going.

(MORLEY leads CHERYL and BILLY off.)

Class Seven: Yes, Dear

(Some of the STUDENTS are sitting on the chairs, others can be pacing. They are all on phones. Nearby, DONALD HEMSWORTH observes. The STUDENTS are all speaking into their phones with things like, "Yes. Sure. Okay. I understand.")

(After a moment, DONALD holds up a hand.)

DONALD: Okay, that's good. You've got the basics down. Now, watch and learn.

(DONALD takes out his phone and "answers.")

DONALD: *(Into the phone:)* Hello, dear. No, I, I just got home. And you... Oh, sorry, go ahead... Uh huh... Oh... Oh!... Well... Will you be home for dinner?... No, I didn't mean to... I didn't mean to... Darling, I didn't mean... No, I... No, I... I... I... Okay. Okay... No, I understand... Alright... I'll see you later. I... *(He pulls the phone away from his ear:)* love you.

(He hangs up, looking dejected. He takes a breath, and faces his STUDENTS.)

DONALD: Okay, what did you observe?

(A student, MISY, raises her hand. DONALD points to her.)

MISY: You were talking to your significant other, and they kept cutting you off.

DONALD: That's right, Misy. Thank you. What else?

(Another student, TAYLOR, raises her hand. DONALD points to her.)

TAYLOR: You seemed...kinda frustrated, or...just like, upset, but kind of holding it in.

DONALD: Very good, Taylor. Here's the thing, the art of playing the significant other to the main character is all about how to express yourself in phone calls with your partner. You tell your story through pauses, through biting your lip, or anxiously toying with the phone cord if it's a period piece. Being a "Yes, dear," performer doesn't mean you don't have a character arc. It just means you have the more difficult task of creating it between the lines.

(He takes his phone and answers it.)

DONALD: *(Into the phone:)* Yes, hello... Okay... Yes... I understand... No, I... I... No, I don't need... I don't need... I said, I don't... Okay, well... No, Mother, I don't need... Will you please stop... I just... Okay, okay, I'll get them... Yes, Mother... That's fine... I have to go... I... *(Pulls the phone away from his ear:)* love you...

(MISY raises her hand. DONALD takes a moment to gather himself, and then he points to her.)

MISY: So, are you saying "Yes, dear" roles can also be parent/child relationships?

DONALD: What? Oh, no...that was really my mother calling. She's involved in this multi-level marketing thing...never mind. Anyway, um, technically, "Yes, dear" roles can be parent/ child relationships, but in reality, the "Yes, dear" role is strictly limited to mothers of main characters.

(MORLEY enters with CHERYL and BILLY.)

MORLEY: Whoops. Wrong door. I'm just escorting these fine people out. Cheryl, little Mortimer, this is Mr. Hemsworth.

CHERYL: Oh, wow, like the Hemsworth brothers?

DONALD: Well, not really, they're just my—

MORLEY: Yes, exactly like that. You see, here at Morley Buck's School of Serious Acting for Extraordinary Actors, we attract some of the finest teaching talent in the world.

BILLY: I can't believe we get to meet a real Hemsworth brother. I love Marvel movies.

DONALD: Distant cousin, really—

MORLEY: *(Jumping in:)* Who grew up together practically as brothers. Well, I guess we should be going.

BILLY: This place is the best.

CHERYL: Yes, we must really be going. Immediately.

BILLY: But I want to hang out with a Hemsworth.

CHERYL: Come along, little Mortimer... I mean Billy. Ahhh

(CHERYL doesn't wait for MORLEY. She heads off, ushering BILLY away. MORLEY follows close behind.)

DONALD: Okay, class, where were we?

(He checks his phone. Long sigh. He answers.)

DONALD: Mother, I can't really talk. I... No... No... No, I won't sell supplements for you... I... I... No...

(He covers the phone and speaks to the class.)

DONALD: I need to take this. Practice your "Are you coming homes."

(DONALD exits talking on the phone.)

DONALD: Mother, please stop... No, listen...

(DONALD is gone. The STUDENTS begin to exit, all saying versions of, "When are you coming home, dear?" and "Will you be home for dinner?" and the like.)

Class Eight: The Single Tear

(A STUDENT is center stage, crying...sort of...)

(After a moment, JASMINE DEMPSEY walks up to the STUDENT and gets close to their face.)

JASMINE: *(Counting:)* One...two, three...four, five, six...and...seven.

(JASMINE takes a step back from the STUDENT.)

JASMINE: Not bad, but not great either. Next.

(The STUDENT exits and steps back and another STUDENT enters. JASMINE gives them some space for a few moments and the STUDENT begins to tear up.)

(After a moment of crying, JASMINE approaches the student.)

JASMINE: *(Counting:)* One...two...three... Three!

(JASMINE steps back.)

JASMINE: Very good. Next.

(The STUDENT smiles and heads off. Another student, ZACH, enters. He limps a little. He goes to center stage and he is already crying. JASMINE gives him some space for a moment, but he is really crying. She throws her hands up in frustration and walks over to him.)

JASMINE: I'm not even going to bother counting, you are sobbing.

ZACH: *(Still crying:)* I stubbed my toe walking in.

JASMINE: That's a shame, but you could have used that. Hold in the pain, release the valve just enough, and drop one single, perfect tear. Instead, you open the floodgates. Terrible. Next.

(ZACH limps off. The next STUDENT approaches, takes their spot, and begins to tear up. MORLEY enters with CHERYL and BILLY.)

CHERYL: You've got to be kidding me. You are making us walk through another class.

MORLEY: *(Pointing:)* The exit is right this way. I promise.

(MORLEY, CHERYL, and BILLY cross the stage. CHERYL stops near the crying student.)

CHERYL: *(To the STUDENT:)* Are you okay?

JASMINE: Don't interrupt.

CHERYL: But they're crying

JASMINE: No, they are not. They are single-tearing...or trying to, at least.

CHERYL: They're what?

MORLEY: Jasmine Dempsey is the foremost expert in the art of single-tearing. All of the great actors can produce a single, solitary, perfect tear. Anyway, come along, the exit is right this way.

CHERYL: I...never mind, let's go...

(MORLEY leads CHERYL on. BILLY lags behind, transfixed by the crying STUDENT.)

JASMINE: *(To the STUDENT:)* Come on. You can do it. Squeeze out just one perfect drop of emotion.

(MORLEY and CHERYL are at the far edge of the stage. MORLEY motions to a point offstage.)

MORLEY: Here we are. The exit. It was nice meeting you, Cheryl.

CHERYL: Thank you. It was...interesting. Come on, Billy.

(CHERYL turns and sees that BILLY is still center stage.)

CHERYL: Come along, Billy. It's time to go.

BILLY: Mom...

CHERYL: What is it? We've been here so long I wouldn't be surprised if you had to go to the restroom again. But we'll find someplace else. Anyplace else.

BILLY: No, Mom, I...I want to be an actor.

CHERYL: No. You can't mean it. We're getting out of here right now.

(The ASSISTANT comes on and goes over by MORLEY.)

BILLY: Oh, but I do mean it, Mother.

CHERYL: Don't start calling me "Mother." It's "Mom."

BILLY: It's too late, Mother. I've caught the acting bug.

(CHERYL falls to her knees.)

CHERYL: No! Nooooooooo!!!

(CHERYL looks over at her son.)

JASMINE: *(Looking over at CHERYL:)* Oh, my goodness. Look at that.

(JASMINE hurries over to CHERYL.)

JASMINE: One... One perfect, solitary tear... So beautiful...

(CHERYL hangs her head in her hands.)

The ASSISTANT whispers into MORLEY's ear.)

MORLEY: *(Responding to the ASSISTANT:)* Yes... Of course... Cancel it... No, Sunday is my funday... Red roses... Never... Only under a full moon... Sparkling water... *Jaws: The Revenge...* Thanks... *(Turning to CHERYL:)* Cheryl, fear not. With a little luck and some hard work, we can turn... *(To BILLY:)* what's your name again?

BILLY: Billy.

MORLEY: No, that's really no good. From now on you'll be called...Brandon. You've got a Brandon

look to you.

BILLY: I...uh... Thanks?

MORLEY: All that's left to do is get that enrollment check. Now, I know I said it's one-ninety-nine-ninety-nine per week, but the enrollment fee is four-ninety-nine-ninety-nine. Processing fees and all. Will that be cash or charge, Cheryl?

(CHERYL is really crying now. Not just a single tear.)

JASMINE: Now you've gone and ruined a perfect single tear moment.

MORLEY: Yes, but we're giving the world another actor. And if there's one thing this world needs, it's more actors.

(The ASSISTANT looks out to the audience.)

ASSISTANT: Thank you all for coming tonight. I hope you had a wonderful evening. Get home safe.

MORLEY: What are you doing? Who are you talking to?

ASSISTANT: All I ever do is whisper nonsense to you. I wanted a line, so I went for it. I was just thanking the audience.

MORLEY: What audience? What are you talking about? I don't have time for this. I have to take Cheryl's payment and I have to teach Faking a British Accent in a few minutes. Come along, Cheryl.

(MORLEY helps CHERYL up and they cross the stage. She continues to cry softly.)

MORLEY: Let's get you signed up, Brandon.

BILLY: Awesome!

(JASMINE and her STUDENTS begin to exit.)

JASMINE: There were entirely too many tears today people. Next week I don't want you coming in so hydrated. Remember, you can't cry if you're dry.

(JASMINE and the STUDENTS exit. Only the ASSISTANT remains. The ASSISTANT looks out at the audience again.)

ASSISTANT: Have a great night.

(The ASSISTANT takes a little bow.)

MORLEY: *(From offstage:)* Come on, Randy!

(The ASSISTANT scurries off.)