

HUMPHREY There is more to life than pizza and beer.

CARL You've got a lot to learn son. What am I sayin? Scratch that last word. Don't get me wrong, I got nothin against Chinese, like I always said, they make some great beer. But I don't want my daughter ridin off into the sunset with an out of work actor in that beaten up old jalopy out there.

HUMPHREY Sir, I am not intending to ride off into the sunset. For an actor, New York is the center of the Universe, and my car is brand new.

CARL Right! New York is the center of the Universe and that Jag out there belongs to you.

HUMPHREY Right on both counts.

CARL If there's one thing I that gets my back up it's a liar. I can deal with the actin thing, a man's got have a hobby but—

*(Humphrey takes his registration out of his wallet to show Carl.)*

HUMPHREY It's my car. Here's the registration. See? Xun Zemin, they wouldn't let me use Humphrey DuBios.

*(Carl looks at the registration then walks to the window, looks out, and then turns back to Humphrey.)*

CARL That's your car?

HUMPHREY Yes sir, bought and paid for.

CARL How much down?

HUMPHREY Bought and paid for.

CARL Cash?

HUMPHREY Cash.

CARL So how—

HUMPHREY Those restaurants I work in—my father owns them.

*(Pause)*

CARL I need a beer. You sure you don't drink beer?

HUMPHREY Well you said you can't stand a liar so to be honest, I love beer, but Ruth has this thing about beer drinkers so—

CARL I understand completely. So what'll it be?

HUMPHREY Actually that brand of Chinese beer you have is my favorite. My uncle Wang owns fifteen percent of the company.

CARL I'll drink to that.

*(Carl gets two beers from the refrigerator, and hands one to Humphrey.)*

You want a glass?

HUMPHREY Hell no. In the restaurant business I get so tired of the correct glass. It's great to just get your mouth over the bottle.

CARL You're startin to grow on me. So how come you're workin as a waiter?

HUMPHREY My dad doesn't accept the validity of self-expression through the arts. He wanted me to be a doctor.

CARL Good idea.

HUMPHREY We had some major confrontations. He's from a prominent Hong Kong family, studied economics at Oxford but always regretted not choosing medicine. An actor was not what he was expecting.

CARL I'll bet.

HUMPHREY My Mom calmed him down, persuaded him to let me give it a try.

CARL That's what mothers do.

HUMPHREY Dad always figures a way to make everything work to some kind of business advantage. He said if you want to be an actor you can start in our restaurants. I shift around from one to another. Nobody knows who I am. My real job is to check on what people are doing.

CARL A company spy, damn!

HUMPHREY Not exactly, I mean I own the company in way, or I will someday.

CARL Well I'm a union man, but that does make a difference.

HUMPHREY I treat the whole process as an exercise in character development. In every restaurant I become someone else.

CARL Show me.

HUMPHREY What do you mean?

CARL You're an actor. Let's see what you do?

HUMPHREY I can't do it here I don't have proper motivation.

CARL           What the hell does that mean?

HUMPHREY I have to believe in who I'm playing. The waiter thing doesn't work for me unless my senses take in appropriate stimulus, the aroma of food, plates clicking, empty conversation.

CARL           Well give me somethin else.

HUMPHREY What do you mean?

*(Carl takes a swig from his bottle and turns around holding his bottle and his belly out as he speaks.)*

CARL           What does guzzlin beer from the bottle with a guy in a tee shirt do for you?

*(There is a pause as Humphrey stares with his mouth open in sheer admiration.)*

HUMPHREY Wow.

CARL           Wow?

HUMPHREY This is a little hard to explain and it's a little overwhelming. But you have to understand that ever since the first time I saw, Street Car Named Desire, when I was in high school, I've wanted to be an actor.

CARL           Brando, he's up there with Boggie.

HUMPHREY To a New York actor he is God!

CARL           I like him, he'll never be a John Wayne, but he's good. That Stanley Kowalski was a regular guy if you know what I mean.

HUMPHREY Ever since Ruth told me about both of you I've wanted to meet you. Not just because of Ruth but because of the associations. And now seeing you—well it only strengthens the visual association.

CARL           What the hell are you talkin about?

HUMPHREY You said it yourself, Tee shirts and beer, even the look of this place.

CARL           I don't know if that's good or bad.

HUMPHREY Your wife's name is Stella, just like in the play and yours is Carl.

CARL           So what?

HUMPHREY Karl Malden played Mitch, Stanley's best friend. It's always been my dream to someday play—

*(Humphrey takes a step downstage and announces Stanley Kowalski as though he was presenting Elvis.)*

STANLEY KOWALSKI!!!

CARL A dark restaurant in a waiters outfit, a daggo or a froggy maybe. But a Polak? No way.

HUMPHREY This is New York, anything is possible. Non-traditional casting is the future of theatre.

CARL Ok, if you say so. What the hell do I know? The last play I saw was Little Red Ridin Hood in second grade. That was what you'd call non-traditional casting. Juliet Mariano played the wolf cause none of guys could memorize the lines.

HUMPHREY If someone would only give me chance to audition I know I'd blow them away. I've got Stanley in my soul.

CARL Just a minute.

*(Carl runs to his room returning quickly with a dirty torn tee shirt tossing it to Humphrey.)*

Here's your motivation Humphrey. Lets see what you've got.

*(Humphrey dreamily smells the dirty tee shirt, pulls off his shirt and puts on the Tee shirt. He grabs his beer and takes a big gulp. He slowly walks downstage facing the forth wall and yells.)*

HUMPHREY STELL—I can't do it. It's out of context. It doesn't feel right.

CARL Well let's give it a context. What do you need?

HUMPHREY The way I see it, the play could be brought up to date, take place in New York City. Stanley Kowalski could become Stanley Chen. That rundown apartment could be one like this.

CARL Wait a minute.

HUMPHREY I just meant it could be an older apartment with lots of character. It gives you a real sense of place. A hot summer in New York can be every bit as seedy as New Orleans.

CARL You've got the settin right.

HUMPHREY I need someone to work against. Acting is about response.

CARL           So I'll respond.

HUMPHREY Are you sure you're up for this?

CARL           I relate to Stanley more than you. I married Stella.

*(Humphrey takes out a sheet of paper from his back pocket and hands it to Stanley.)*

HUMPHREY You're Stella. I wrote my own scene to make it work better for me.

CARL           Stella?

HUMPHREY Just act like your wife.

CARL           No problem.

HUMPHREY We're at the kitchen table.

*(They move to the kitchen table.)*

                  Ok Carl. May I call you Carl? It helps me get to the next level. Imagine working with Carl Malden?

CARL           Go ahead. I'm gettin into this now.

HUMPHREY Middle of the page, where it says Mister Chen's chopsticks, etc.

*(Carl reads his lines badly and Humphrey over acts.)*

CARL           Mr. Piggy Chen is playing way too much with his chopsticks to worry about anything else!

HUMPHREY You finally figured it out this time, sugar.

CARL           Go clean your mouth and those dirty chopsticks and then get the plates out of here.

*(Carl looks up from the script to ask a question.)*

                  Just a minute, it says here you got to break a plate.

HUMPHREY That's ok. It's just a reading.

*(Carl brings a plate from the sink to the table.)*

CARL           Don't stop now Humphrey, that's the kind of thing I'd always wanted to do to Stella.

*(Humphrey takes the plate and smashes it on the floor.)*

HUMPHREY I'll show you how to get rid of plates! And don't carry on like that to me! Piggy—Chink—dirty chopstick!" you've been blabbing way too much like that!

CARL You tell her Humphrey!

HUMPHREY You're acting like a princess.

CARL Just a minute—

HUMPHREY Confucius said—"Every Man is an Emperor!" And I am Emperor in this house! You just remember that!

*(Humphrey runs to the sink, grabs another plate and hurls it to the floor.)*

That's mine done! How about I take care of yours?

*(Carl jumps up and stops him.)*

CARL That's enough Humphrey you're scaring me. There's somethin to this actin thing.

HUMPHREY You read those lines pretty well.

CARL All I had to do was think back a few years. Marriage stays with you, like permanent heartburn.

HUMPHREY It can be a wonderful experience. My parents have been together for thirty-four years.

CARL Obviously you ain't ever been married. But you got that look. Is this thing with you and Ruth gettin serious?

HUMPHREY Well—Carl—Sir—

CARL Carl is fine.

HUMPHREY Well—Carl—I'm in love with her.

CARL In love, I've been there and believe me it ain't a good reason to get married.

HUMPHREY To live your life with the one—

CARL I was in love with Stella.

HUMPHREY And your marriage is still going strong.

CARL            You've got me cornered now Humphrey. I said I couldn't stand a liar so here's the true. Ruth set this up. She came in here tonight and wanted us to pretend like we was still together. I left Stella when Ruth was still fifteen. Stella and me—it just wasn't a match. When Ruth was old enough and the chance came to make a clean break, I left.

HUMPHREY Why didn't she tell me?

CARL            Who the hell knows? I can't think like a woman. Sixteen years I tried to understand what Stella was all about but it never worked and Ruth is just like her mother.

HUMPHREY I can't believe Ruth lied to me.

CARL            If you're thinkin of matrimony you'd better get used to it.

HUMPHREY But she never—

CARL            Humphrey I feel a kind of bond with you—Stanley and Boggie—you know what I mean? So I'm goin to give it to you straight. Marriage needs the kind of commitment from day one that says I'm here cause I want to be. I never had that. Stella was pregnant and the way I was raised that meant marriage no matter what. We loved each other but we didn't really like each other when we shared the same bathroom in the morning and that makes all the difference.

HUMPHREY I think I'll have that second beer.

CARL            Uncle Wang's beer is on the top shelf to the left.

*(Humphrey gets the beer.)*