

## **ACCIDENTAL DEATH OF AN ANARCHIST – CHARACTER SYNOPSES AND AUDITION PIECES**

*Important: This will be a gender-blind casting – all roles may be filled by a male, female or non-binary actor.*

*This is a farce, there is some physical and slapstick comedy.*

**MANIAC, 30/40/50+.** An unnamed compulsive performer, able to see the audience. Irrepressible, zany, sharp-witted, charismatic, manipulative. Several disguises and voice changes. Strong energy.

**BURTON, 30/40/50+.** Inspector Burton from the 3rd floor. Short-tempered, world-weary exasperated. The butt of jokes and slapstick physical abuse.

**SUPERINTENDENT, 55+.** Superintendent Curry, the station chief. Unprincipled, corrupt, always looking to dodge responsibility. Nervous energy.

**DAISY, 30/40+.** Detective Daisy, a plain clothes detective. Vain, corrupt, violent, not terribly bright.

**JOSEPH, 20+.** Constable Joseph, the superintendent's aide. Desperate to please, will corroborate absolutely anything.

**JACKSON\*, 20+.** PC Jackson, from the 3rd floor. Small role, a relatively inexperienced and possibly idealistic young officer.

**PHELAN\*, 25+.** Fi Phelan, a journalist. Sassy, smart, from a privileged background. Incisive journalist, keen to break a sensational story uncovering police corruption. The only non-comedic role in the play.

\*Jackson and Phelan may be played by the same actor.

## AUDITION PIECES

### PIECE 1

*Fi Phelan holds a notebook. She is a journalist and has just arrived. The maniac is posing as a visiting forensic pathologist.*

SUPERINTENDENT. I hope they looked after you downstairs.

PHELAN. I got a cup of very scummy tea, yeah. And the sweaty guy on reception asked me if I was feeling alright –

SUPERINTENDENT. Well that's all part of our new Met inclusion and engagement initiative to build community trust.

PHELAN. Right, yeah. You could also try hiring people who aren't white men. That might help too.

SUPERINTENDENT. Well we're actually quite a diverse place here, aren't we Detective?

DAISY. Uh... are we?

SUPERINTENDENT. Just a bit. I'm left handed for one thing. And we've got a woman on the floor below. Send her up actually –

PHELAN. It's okay, I believe you.

DAISY. And my wife's from Wales, so... DI Dan Daisy, hey, how's it going, you smell amazing.

PHELAN. OK, that's creepy.

SUPERINTENDENT. Can we offer you a drink? Tea? Coffee? There's prosecco somewhere –

PHELAN. I'd rather get a wiggle on if that's cool. I need to upload the article tonight. So I have a question for you first, Detective, I hope you don't mind if I record this?

DAISY. Oh, uh, is that the question?

PHELAN. And another one after that.

DAISY. Right, cos we'd rather not –

MANIAC. Record away, Miss Phelan!

*(Sotto, to DAISY) Golden rule of improv: never block.*

DAISY: But if she tapes it we can't deny anything later on –

PHELAN: Great. So...

*(Starts the recording)* Why is it you've been called 'The Window-Straddler'?

DAISY. Oh, for...!

PHELAN. Or 'The Straddling Detective'.

MANIAC. Ooh, you're like a rat up a drainpipe aren't you?

SUPERINTENDENT. Who calls him that?

PHELAN. Several climate change protestors that were interrogated in this Station have been using it –

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh, that lot! That's fine then, I thought you meant by other coppers.

MANIAC. Truth be told, he'll straddle anything Miss Phelan. He's famous for it. You plonk it in front of him, he'll park himself on it like a see-saw. He'll straddle you if you stay here too long.

DAISY. I won't. I won't do that. Until we get to know each other and clear consent has been granted.

PHELAN. Uh-huh. Because one of these protestors told me some pretty wild stories about your interrogation technique, Detective.

DAISY. Okay, whatever, like what?

PHELAN *(reads)*. Detective Daisy made me sit on the fourth floor windowsill with my legs dangling off the edge, then started insulting me, prodding me, saying things like "Why don't you just jump, you useless piece of shit, everyone wants you dead, what's the matter, too scared, little boy..."

DAISY. I didn't put the Anarchist guy on the windowsill, yeah? I couldn't have got him up there for one thing, he was a pretty stocky bloke. Those kids you're talking about were skinny little streaks of piss –

PHELAN. Oh so you could get them up there?

MANIAC. Had he wanted to. He's strong. So what? That's not a crime is it? Is that what you want at your paper? To make it illegal to be strong?

PHELAN. So, assuming you didn't dangle him out of the window, why is there no record of his parabola?

DAISY. His what?

PHELAN. Parabola.

DAISY. Maybe he didn't have one.

SUPERINTENDENT. Yes, not everyone has everything.

DAISY. What's a palabola?

SUPERINTENDENT. My cousin Ben hasn't got a belly button –

MANIAC. I'll field this one gentlemen: parabola, from the Italian, *parabola*, meaning the arc with which something falls to the earth.

## PIECE 2

*The maniac is posing as a judge who has come to investigate the recent death of an Anarchist who was being held by the police. He has a folder of documents concerning the incident.*

MANIAC (*To the SUPERINTENDENT*). On the night in question, in this very room, you had a train driver who you believed was responsible for the bombing of a bank a week earlier, agreed?

SUPERINTENDENT. Indeed.

MANIAC. Lovely. Now in this statement, he's called an *Anarchist*. Why are we calling him that?

DAISY. That weren't us. The chief constable said we had to call him that, sir –

MANIAC. I see, a bigger boy made you do it?

DAISY. Well Dame Penelope in this case, but yeah basically.

SUPERINTENDENT. First off we called him a *terrorist*, m'lud, on account of him setting off a bomb, which is absolutely classic terrorist stuff, traditionally, but Dame Penelope was keen for us to call him an 'Anarchist' because as you can see he's uh –

MANIAC. White?

SUPERINTENDENT. Italian. And she was of the opinion that you don't really get Italian terrorists.

MANIAC. Well.... Brutus springs to mind, but go on.

SUPERINTENDENT: Plus, there's the PR issue of not wanting to scare the public. Which apparently the word 'terrorist' will do, cos it makes people think about big nasty organisations with proper goals and guns and hats and so on, whereas your 'anarchists' are more like lone loonies who just ... do stuff ... for no reason.

MANIAC: Of course. And what reason could anyone have for wanting to bomb a bank? Perhaps he'd seen that bonuses are back to their highest levels since 2008? Or perhaps he'd just tried to get through to customer services, amirite?

*He offers a high five to JOSEPH.*

JOSEPH. Totally.

*The SUPERINTENDENT shoots JOSEPH an angry glance.*

MANIAC. Either way, after questioning this *Anarchist* about said bombing, you told the press there was 'a weight of evidence' against him', yes?

SUPERINTENDENT. I did say that, yes, at first, but later on –

MANIAC. Let's stick with 'at first' for now please, Superintendent, we are still in the first act after all –

SUPERINTENDENT. Of course. Please do call me Andy.

MANIAC. So, *at first*, Andy, you said that just before midnight, our train-driving Anarchist was 'suddenly seized by a raptus' – your words – and threw himself out of the window, hitting the ground....to death. Now, a raptus? What is that? Isn't that some kind of dinosaur?

DAISY. What? Is it?

JOSEPH. I believe that's a raptor, m'lud. Velociraptor. Small therapod, about yea big, probably covered in feathers they now think –

SUPERINTENDENT. Stop it.

JOSEPH *immediately stops talking.*

MANIAC. Very good, thank you Constable, and this is a ...?

SUPERINTENDENT. Raptus, m'lud. Also know as 'excited delirium' when we use it in police reports to uh...

MANIAC. Justify lethal use of force.

SUPERINTENDENT. Exactly.

MANIAC. Here we are:

*(Reads.)* 'Raptus. A suicidal impulse induced by a heightened situation that compels otherwise sane people towards unhealthy behaviour.'

SUPERINTENDENT. That. Yeah.

DAISY. In this case, the Anarchist suddenly chucking himself out of the window.

MANIAC. Very unhealthy. Okay then. Let's see it.

SUPERINTENDENT. Oh. Well... How do we...?

MANIAC. Put it on its feet man. Do a little reconstruction. Give us your famous raptus-inducing entrance.

SUPERINTENDENT. But I wasn't actually here, at that point, it was someone else –

MANIAC. Oh come now, don't pin it on some off-stage goon. Play your part man. Of course you were.

SUPERINTENDENT. Well...

JOSEPH. I'm pretty sure you were, sir –

SUPERINTENDENT. Can you stop butting in, Constable! Jeez Louise! And get me another tea!

JOSEPH. Yes, sir, sorry, sir.

DAISY. And an oat flat white.

JOSEPH *exits*.

MANIAC. Come on, Andy, I bet you know how to make one hell of an entrance.

SUPERINTENDENT. Yes, I, well I do actually.

MANIAC. Of course you do. Please...

SUPERINTENDENT. Right well, it went something a little like this, I like to give it a bit of a swagger, you know, do my stance...

*Demonstrates his walk, ending with an affected stance.*

MANIAC. Oh yes. Bravo!

SUPERINTENDENT (*addresses Daisy as if he were the Anarchist*). And I'm like, 'Now look here, you Anarchist... prat, don't you go wasting police time, please...'

MANIAC. No! Boo! Stick to the script, Andy. There's no censorship in here, thank you. Give me your exact words.

SUPERINTENDENT. Yeah, alright, well, in the first statement it's more like, 'Oi!'

MANIAC. Yes! Oi! Go on.

SUPERINTENDENT. 'Oi, fart-face! Stop mucking about and tell us the truth, you little runt.'

MANIAC. 'Runt'? Definitely 'runt'?

SUPERINTENDENT. That's right.

MANIAC. Fair play. Carry on.