

VERA, CHUCK AND DAVE (TOGETHER)

Fosse.

*They have a moment of blissful reverie.  
Perhaps Vera and Chuck even get up and do  
a few “Fosse” moves (jazz hands, gyrations)  
and then wince from their respective pains).*

VERA

Oh, God. My one Fosse audition. For—what was the last thing he did?

CHUCK

*Big Deal.*

VERA

*Big Deal.* . I took the bus to New York, stood in line for God knows how long, and he friggin’  
*saw me!* And when I left—

CHUCK

You thought, “that’s what I dreamed of.”

VERA

Yep.

CHUCK

I went up for that show, too. God, scared? But thrilled.

DAVE

*Thrilled!* I did too.

CHUCK

You couldn’t dance.

DAVE

Yep. Of course I got cut. And you know what he said to us losers? “Ladies and gentlemen, thank  
you for sharing your talents. I’m sorry to say that I can’t use you in this particular show.”

CHUCK

Class!

VERA

Respect!

DAVE

Best day of my professional life, maybe.

*They bask in the reflection of the memory.*

VERA

Of course, I lied on my resume to get in the door.

DAVE

Me, too.

CHUCK

Yep.

DAVE

(*To VERA:*) What did you say?

VERA

That I spent two years as a dancer on *Shindig*.

CHUCK

Jesus! How old *are* you? *Shindig* was certainly before my time.

VERA

I know. And I was so stupid I didn't know Fosse worked in Hollywood and knew, like *everybody*. (*To Chuck:*) What did you lie about?

CHUCK

That I was in the road show of *Pippin*

VERA

Did you even know Fosse directed *Pippin*?

CHUCK

No. But I thought, “Fosse will cast me, you know, because I just did *You’re a Good Man, Charlie Brown* in high school!”

VERA

Yeah, that’s a real heavy dance show....(To DAVE:) And what did *you* tell Mr. Fosse?

DAVE

That I always wanted to work with a genius.

VERA AND CHUCK (TOGETHER)

Really?

DAVE

Yep.

VERA

And—?

DAVE

Let’s just say I didn’t get cut as quick as either of you. And *I* can’t dance.

CHUCK

And that, ladies and gentlemen, is why the theater is a bitch.

VERA

*Show business* is a bitch. Not just theater.

DAVE

(To VERA:) That’s right. You did do that one movie...

VERA

Excuse me. I did a few.

CHUCK

You were great in *Roman Fever*. Best Actress award if I remember?

DAVE

Really?

VERA

Nomination. Daytime Emmys. My little local PBS movie put me up against Afternoon Specials. Didn't have a chance. That woman from *Little House on the Prairie* won.

DAVE

For what?

VERA

Who knows? Her kid dropped out of school, or did drugs or murdered somebody...I forget.

CHUCK

Still it should have led to bigger things.

VERA

Yeah, well...

DAVE

Well, you got that lead in the one with the werewolf loose on a train. What was it called?

VERA

"Werewolf on a Train."

CHUCK

Excellent. Tell the public what it's getting, I say.

DAVE

You were his final victim, right?

VERA

Yeah. I was this wolf expert who happened to be taking a train with a werewolf loose on it.

DAVE

What are the odds?

VERA

Pretty bad for my character, as it turned out. And for everyone else who went before me. Let's see, there was the shy priest who caught me taking my top off in my sleeper car, the hunky conductor who took my top off before we did it in my sleeper car, and of course, the doctor.

DAVE

He didn't get to take your top off?

VERA

Oh, indeed he did. You see, I had a near-death tussle with the werewolf but survived the first attack. The doctor had to take my top off to make sure that I wasn't wounded, you know, in the boobs.

DAVE

Very considerate.

VERA

Yeah, the werewolf got him before me, though.

CHUCK

You fought off the werewolf bravely as I remember.

VERA

Right. But not before he—

VERA, CHUCK AND DAVE (TOGETHER)

Got your/my top off.

CHUCK

God! Men are pigs!

DAVE

No, now, not all men are pigs. And not all women are saints.

VERA

Agreed.

DAVE

Just last year a woman, well, she made me feel violated during an audition.

VERA

*(Drily:)* Do tell.

DAVE

It was a Zoom audition.

*All three groan in disgust.*

CHUCK

God, I hate those.

DAVE

Anyway, I was auditioning for this really great part. He was a kind of suave older lover. Kinda like Sam Elliott.

*CHUCK and VERA exchange a look.*

DAVE

And the casting director, a *woman*, kept asking me to stop and then try it a different way. Oh, and by the way, she was not on camera. Well, I'm thinking, *I must be on the fast track if she's spending this much time with me.* Then I heard, well, little noises.

CHUCK

What kind of noises?

DAVE

*(To CHUCK:)* Like, she was enjoying my audition a little too much. Here, you be me and I'll be her.

CHUCK

Hell, no. I have a callback. The last thing I need is another improv with you, Mr. Rough Stuff.

DAVE

I promise I'll be gentle.

CHUCK

Heard that before.

DAVE

OK. Vera, you be me.

VERA

Oh, again with the non-traditional casting. (*Sighs.*) OK.

DAVE

(*VERA:*) My line was “I still believe I can love again.” Say it like you’re me.

VERA

“I still believe I can love again.”

DAVE

(*As the female casting director:*) Oh, Ohhhh. Yes Try it again. Deeper voice. And slower,. Much slower!

VERA

I

DAVE

Oh!

VERA

Still.

DAVE

OHHH!

VERA

Believe

DAVE

Mmmmmm!

VERA

I can—(*normal voice:*) OK. I get the picture.

DAVE

The noises became—more rapid and then, I swear, a final *crescendo*, if you follow. And then, here’s the worst part. She whispers, “Thanks. That was great,” and then just hangs up!

VERA

Disgusting. But now I guess you know what it's like.

DAVE

Did that—?

VERA

I don't think any guy ever, you know, pleased himself. Well, probably. But not in my presence. But, I mean, why do you think that creep of a director and his even creepier producer kept hanging around the set on naked booby days? (*Shivers.*) And they really thought I'd be scared when they suggested that I might not get more work if I weren't, you know, *cooperative*.

CHUCK

Do you think they had anything to do with—you know...

VERA

What the “slowdown” in my career? Because I didn't let them see the rest of me? No! Maybe. I don't know. Who cares....(*But she does.*) I'd like to think my lackluster career was not due to Norman Sunshine.

CHUCK

He was the producer?

DAVE

The guy who had like five wives and, what was it, twelve kids?

CHUCK

Yeah. Remember the jokes? (*Sings:*) “Let the Sunshine In,”

DAVE

(*Sings from “Put on a Happy Face”*) “Spread Sunshine all over the place...”

CHUCK

(*To VERA:*) Do you think if you had become Mrs. Sunshine things would have turned out differently?

VERA

Can you name any of the ex-Mrs. Sunshines?



CHUCK

Good point.

DAVE

*(After a reflective pause:)* I guess you're right. I guess I should be like women do and reported that woman. But I didn't.

CHUCK

Because you liked it.

VERA AND DAVE TOGETHER

What?

CHUCK

*(To DAVE:)* You liked it! You were Sam Elliott! You made an impact on an audience. Okay, a gross one, but nevertheless...

DAVE

Now, look—

CHUCK

I'm not criticizing you. I get it! For a few—admittedly weird—minutes you were doing what we all want to do. Entertain an audience!

VERA

That's like saying that my taking my top off to turn on some straight-to-video creeps was somehow artistically rewarding for me?

CHUCK

No, of course not. But that's because you weren't acting. You were just stripping under the guise of acting.

VERA

Hey, wait a minute!

CHUCK

I'm saying it wrong. I just mean that Dave was playing a role and it turned someone on. She didn't ask him to drop his drawers.

*DAVE suddenly looks sheepish. This registers with VERA and CHUCK.*

CHUCK

You didn't.

DAVE

I didn't whip anything out. I just took my shirt off. And, kinda unbuttoned my top pants button.

VERA

God, who are you?

DAVE

It was relevant to the scene.

VERA

Oh, God! I give up.

CHUCK

No, listen! Do you think that thousands of guys, and quite a few women didn't freeze frame your werewolf movie and—(to DAVE:) Am I right?

DAVE

I...wouldn't say thousands. I mean it gets like half a star on Rotten Tomatoes.

CHUCK

You know what I mean!

DAVE

I do.

CHUCK

And, yes, it was gratuitous and cheesy and exploitative. But while you were waiting for Joe Papp to call and ask you to play Juliet, it was a job. And, in some way you entertained an audience.

VERA

I'm still not sure what you're saying.

CHUCK

Oh, I'm just so tired of...everybody is getting so...What's wrong with sex? Sex is fun. Sex is healthy. Sex is life. I would have done nude, if anyone asked me. And, yes, if it turned the director on, so long as I thought it would also turn an audience on, I'd do it. But not just to get the director or producer or whoever off privately.

DAVE

You did nude?

CHUCK

Did I say I did nude?

DAVE

*(To VERA:)* Isn't that what he said?

VERA

No.

DAVE

*(To CHUCK:)* But you would have?

CHUCK

Yeah.

DAVE

Really? With that body?

VERA

Oh, nice!

DAVE

No, I just mean—a

CHUCK

No, Dave. Nobody asked me to then and I'm reasonably sure nobody would ask me now. Unless I'm in a morgue drawer on that crime series.

DAVE

Are they looking?

CHUCK

I—I'm not saying this right. I just am so damned confused about it all now. And, I think you should love your body.

DAVE

Just not show it?

VERA

Oh, I don't know. You have a point.

*VERA starts unbuttoning her blouse.*

CHUCK

What are you doing?

VERA

Well, it's my choice. So I'm going to air them out.

DAVE AND CHUCK (TOGETHER)

Are you--? No!

*They rush to cover her in case she takes her top off.*

VERA

*(Mocking CHUCK:)* "Sex is fun!" "Sex is healthy!" "I think you should love your body!"

CHUCK

You're twisting me all around.

VERA

So, Dave can take his shirt off to pleasure a horny casting director, and that's okay.

CHUCK

No, that's not okay. I'm still trying to process that anyone would want him to take his shirt off, much less drop trou.

DAVE

Yeah? And when's the last time you turned someone on with that bag of sag you call a body?

VERA

Hey! Hey! Stop! This is not helpful! God! What are we doing? We're three professionals sitting here ready to strip naked! And all for one of us to get a three-line part!

*They look up. The unseen assistant has appeared. VERA talks in the assistant's direction.*

VERA

Ready for me? (*Assistant says yes.*) OK.

*She stands up and immediately winces from where DAVE gave her the Heimlich. She glares at him, turns, smiles broadly at the unseen assistant, and exits.)*

DAVE

Seriously, do you think I can play gay?

CHUCK

Seriously, I have no idea.

DAVE

Well! I thought you would have more insight! I realize being gay isn't just the physical act. It's an entire...um....panoply of characteristics.

CHUCK

Please. Fill me in. What is my panoply of characteristics?

DAVE

Well, I mean, how do you present your *authentic self*?

CHUCK

Gimme a break.

DAVE

No, I mean it. Don't be a homophobe.

CHUCK

I'm sorry?

DAVE

You can be a self-hating gay person, you know.

CHUCK

I've heard tell.

DAVE

Well, do you feel that being gay is just about sleeping with men?

CHUCK

God, I hope not. That would mean I haven't been gay for three years.

DAVE

I'm trying to have a serious discussion.

CHUCK

No, you're not. You're trying to mine me for something because you're going after that replacement thing, aren't you?

DAVE

The--?

CHUCK

Yep. Dave, seriously. I'm trying to be your friend here. You're not going to get the part.

DAVE

Wow! That's pretty harsh!

CHUCK

Not as harsh as nearly screwing up the work of the best hip specialist in the Valley!

DAVE

I wasn't trying to hurt you! But now you're trying to psych me out about going for that gay role.

CHUCK

I am not.

DAVE

You're going out for it, aren't you? That's it.

CHUCK

That is not it. I am not going out for it. I'm not right for the part.

DAVE

Why?

CHUCK

Because...I...*we're* too old.

DAVE

*(After a pause:)* Wow. You're homophobic and ageist.

CHUCK

I'm not. The part says, "forties to fifties."

DAVE

I can still—

CHUCK,,

Okay. Okay. Whatever.

DAVE

Don't "whatever" me. Tell me!

CHUCK

I just did.

DAVE

What?

CHUCK

They want someone younger.

DAVE

No, they want someone who can "read" forties to fifties.

CHUCK

Okay, Dave. I don't want to have this discussion. I would leave, but believe it or not, the guy asked me to stay.

DAVE

He--? So, do you think that means you have the part?

CHUCK

No. Well, not yet. God knows why we're still here.

DAVE

Did you do it...gay?

CHUCK

What?

DAVE

You know. Should I see Mr. Eterno as gay?

CHUCK

Sure.

DAVE

No, really.

CHUCK

Jesus H. Christ! It's a dinky part in a sci-fi thing! Do whatever you want!

*VERA returns.*

VERA

*(Looking back at the "assistant":)* Happy to. I have the whole afternoon. Of course, unless Netflix calls. But they said they might go a different way. *(Laughs. Sees that the joke doesn't land with the "assistant." )*. Yeah, well...*(To CHUCK AND DAVE:)* Hello, boys. Still strolling down Memory Lane?

DAVE

How'd it go?

VERA

Yep. Asked me to do it five ways. I was a good little girl and gave them "sexy" Eterno, "robotic" Eterno, batshit crazy Eterno... *(Suddenly very tired:)* Why am I doing this?



CHUCK

Come on. We're all in the same boat.

DAVE

Hey, they asked you to stay...

VERA

True. And, I guess I'm just glad it's not the hundredth Alzheimer's audition. I mean, I'm not that friggin' old!

DAVE

Tell that to Chuck.

VERA

What?

CHUCK

No. I didn't say you were old.

DAVE

He said I was.

CHUCK

I did not. I said you were not right for a particular part!

VERA

Oh, you mean the gay thing?

CHUCK

No!

DAVE

He said I was too old.

CHUCK

I said *we* were too old for *that part*. Jesus, could you drop it?

VERA

Well, I for one am feeling old.

CHUCK

I know. God, if one more young person asks if I was at the Stonewall Riots...I feel like saying "Yes, and I stormed the Bastille, too."