

Under the Impression

by

Joseph Arnone

Copyright © 2021

www.MonologueBlogger.com

All rights reserved. No part of this ePlay may be reproduced or transmitted in any form or by any means electronic or mechanical, including photocopying, recording or any other storage and retrieval system, without the written permission of the author or publisher.

Cast of Characters

TERRY : 55-65
ROLAND : 28
MIGUEL : 40s

Place
Office

Time
Morning

Setting: The play takes place inside a plush office overlooking Manhattan. An exaggerated mountainous display of manuscripts are piled up on the desk. There are still more piles of various shapes and sizes scattered around the room like sculptures being constructed at different stages of progress. A few dog sculptures both big and small decorate the office as well.

At Rise: The play opens with Terry sitting behind his desk and Roland sitting in a chair across from the desk.

TERRY: As you can see I've been buried under an ongoing mountain of work.

ROLAND: Yes.

TERRY: As soon as I'm done reading a single page of anything, another page appears. The faster I read, the faster the pages seem to appear. I can't remember when it started really, must have been in my early years, amazing how that happens. Things pile up... *(referring to manuscripts on his desk)* Which one are you?

ROLAND: *(looking and pointing)* That one, there, it says Roland...

TERRY: Roland? Is that who I'm...no, you're not Roland. FUCK! I wanted Roland...*(hits his office intercom)* Miguel, come in here.

Enter Miguel.

Miguel, why the fuck did you send me this fella? I wanted Roland, Roland Holland, Roland fucking Holland is his name! How do you mistake *this* guy for Roland?

MIGUEL: I don't -

TERRY: Get out!

Miguel exits.

(to Roland) You see? This is the sort of shit I get when I can't pay people's salaries the way that...*(waves his hand in the air)* let it go...*(sighs)* *(picking up manuscript)* So, what the fuck did you write? I might as well look at it...*(reading to himself)* Crap. I can't sell this. You expect me to sell *this*?

ROLAND: I don't know what to say.

TERRY: This is dog shit Rolly boy. Respond!

ROLAND: I...I'd like to think that my writing has, has possibility.

TERRY: Possibility?

ROLAND: Mm-hmm.

TERRY: Possibility. You'd like to think that your writing has possibility. What else do you do?

ROLAND: Uh -

TERRY: You work?

ROLAND: I'm a librarian.

TERRY: You're one of those. Yeah. You ever do any secretary work?

ROLAND: No.

TERRY: Being a librarian is close enough for me. You want a job?

ROLAND: Well, I, what -

TERRY: As my new secretary. Miguel is a shit. Been meaning to fire him for months now. You want it?

ROLAND: What?

TERRY: His job! You want his fucking job or not?

ROLAND: I came here because I was under the impression that you were interested in my novel.

TERRY: Of course not. It's lousy.

ROLAND: But you haven't read it.

TERRY: Do ya actually believe anybody reads any of the submissions all the way through?

ROLAND: Well, I was hoping that -

TERRY: You get ONE PAGE. If the first page is decent, we read on to FIVE, from there TEN and if things really get cooking TWENTY.

ROLAND: But you opened my novel in the middle.

TERRY: Did I?

ROLAND: You did.

TERRY: Would you like for me to read your work from the beginning, Rolly?

ROLAND: First page, please.

TERRY: *(Terry reads first page to himself)* ...It's not that bad.

ROLAND: Really?

TERRY: Come back and see me in three to five.

ROLAND: Three to five, what?

TERRY: Years.

ROLAND: Years?

TERRY: Look kid, I've been working this pound for thirty-five years. I can tell by the scent of you if you're a decent writer. You don't give off the right scent, Rolly. Not one bit. You don't even look like a writer. You look more like a dentist.

ROLAND: How does a writer look?

TERRY: I want to see teeth, REAL teeth, coffee stained chipped teeth. Deeply set eyes, mismanaged hair n' odor stains under your armpits. You look too plump, Rolly. Too much weight 'round them cheeks a' yours. You should be paper thin skinny, cause you're too busy being hungry, choking on coffee and smokin' cigarettes all damn day. You have too much rose in your cheeks. Makes me think of a cherub baby. How's that face gonna be on a book's dust jacket? They'll take one look at you Rolly n' sales will go through the basement. Let's take a look at them nails...too manicured and your suit...it's all wrong. Don't you see pal, I need a writer who looks like they're willing to die for the cause. Are you willing to die Rolly? *(beat)* That's what I mean. Too much air between your ears. You should have barked out a violent YES! If this at all matters to you, go out into the world, get smashed and come back to me in five years when you've lost everything you've ever loved and you've something to say...then maybe, and still, there's no guarantee on this, *maybe* someone else, other than this made up idea of yourself, will actually give a shit enough to read chapter one. You're an infant, Rolly! You'll be eaten by wolves if I don't save you from them.

ROLAND: But, I *am* Roland Holland.

TERRY: What'd you say?

ROLAND: I am the man you sent for.

TERRY: You?

ROLAND: Yes, I am Roland Holland.

Terry buzzes his intercom.

TERRY: Miguel!

Miguel comes into the room.

Who the fuck is this guy?

MIGUEL: That's Mr. Holland, sir.

TERRY: Roland Holland?

MIGUEL: Yes, sir.

TERRY: Can't be.

MIGUEL: It is.

TERRY: Are you playing tricks with me?

MIGUEL: No, sir.

TERRY: Get out! Get the hell out of my office!

*Terry throws a manuscript at Miguel,
narrowly missing him.*

Miguel exits.

TERRY: Roland Holland.

ROLAND: Yes.

TERRY: What?

ROLAND: You said my name and I responded with YES.

TERRY: Identification?

ROLAND: I don't have any.

TERRY: Why not?

ROLAND: I have this...

Roland hands a slip of paper to Terry.

TERRY: *(carefully reading)* ...Even still...

ROLAND: I am Roland Holland. I am the man who wrote *(pointing)*
that manuscript.

*Terry stands up from his desk and looks out
the window.*

TERRY: India.

ROLAND: ...What?

TERRY: Whenever I get stressed.

ROLAND: Oh.

TERRY: Indiaaaa. *(sighs)* Try it.

ROLAND: India.

TERRY: Again but this time really breathe into it.

ROLAND: Innnndiiiiiaaaaaa.

TERRY: (*impressed*) Not bad.

ROLAND: Yeah?

TERRY: Some nights when I'm alone in the office and everyone's gone home, I stroll through the building's hallways and I dance. Nothing too fancy mind you, just a kick or two in my step, enough to mull things over and wonder what it would be like to...to...touch it. Ever wish you could touch it?

ROLAND: Touch...what?

TERRY: Whatever it is you wonder about.

ROLAND: I try not to wonder about anything, really. I've noticed that when my mind wonders I often find myself in trouble. It's usually best for me to remain laser beam focused on my living tasks.

TERRY: Don't you ever relax?

ROLAND: ...No.

TERRY: Dreadful.

ROLAND: ..I really would like to get representation...a book deal perhaps.

TERRY: It'd never happen.

ROLAND: But you called me in.

TERRY: I don't call in anybody, kid.

ROLAND: Miguel, I spoke with Miguel.

TERRY: What did he say?

ROLAND: He invited me to have a face to face meeting with you about my novel. He gave me a day and time to arrive and I made it my business to be here on time.

TERRY: You are Roland Holland...

ROLAND: Yes...why did you invite me to your office?

TERRY: To have a face to face.

ROLAND: Are we having a face to face?

TERRY: What does it look like?

ROLAND: Is this normally how a face to face goes?

TERRY: That all depends on the likes of you.

ROLAND: Am I the one in control?

TERRY: Certainly.

ROLAND: Can we draw up a contract?

TERRY: Nope.

ROLAND: Okay.

TERRY: I'll be kind. Come back in two years time, we will revisit this and see what form of progress you've made. I'll read the first paragraph and we'll see, we'll see where that leads.

ROLAND: What if it's magnificent?

TERRY: See you in two, Rolly.

Roland stands up.

ROLAND: Okay. Sorry. Thank you.

Roland sticks out his hand.

TERRY: Miguel will see you out.

Roland turns and leaves the room.

END OF PLAY