

CALLBACK, JACK  
by Joe Hanrahan

MINDY and FRED are seated in two chairs,  
downstage right.  
Audition table set up stage left.  
Reading from sides together, somewhat privately,  
MINDY and FRED are preparing for their callback audition.  
They read, and then converse, in half voices.

MINDY: Ready?

(FRED nods)

MINDY: How about hello?

FRED: You know, you don't stop breaking my balls.  
When is it going to end?

MINDY: It's me? You have some nerve.

FRED: You don't give me a minute to breathe...

MINDY: Oh, stop, I don't bother you all day long while  
you're at work.

FRED: As soon as I step foot in this house I have to hear  
your lip.

MINDY: What husband comes home and doesn't greet  
his wife?

FRED: HELLO, HELLO, happy? Can I eat now?

MINDY: Eat. Stuff your face. Thought you were going  
on a diet.

FRED: I am.

MINDY: When?

FRED: After I eat.

MINDY: You've been saying you're gonna go on a diet for  
months now.

FRED: I'm preparing.

MINDY: The doctor has given you warnings, plus your smoking.

FRED: Rosa, listen, I've had a really long, miserable day and I just want to make myself a sandwich in peace, sit in front of the television and zone out for a bit, is that so wrong? Why do I have to come home to this?

MINDY: You have five children.

FRED: I know I have five children!

MINDY: It's parent conference week this week and I shouldn't have to do this all alone. You should be in there with me.

FRED: I can't run a business and run around to school at the same time.

MINDY: Yes you can, you own the company, why did you hire a staff...

FRED: (looking away from the side) OK, OK that's enough. They won't let us get any further than this anyway...when they finally let us read.

MINDY: When was your appointment?

FRED: An hour ago.

MINDY: Yeah. They'll give us one minute, and then...Goodbye, We love you, we'll let you know.

FRED: But they don't! They almost never let you know.

MINDY: I know. All they need to do is send an email. A text.

FRED: Sometimes you hear, like weeks after the audition. Or you just see the cast posted on the internet

MINDY: And with this crowd...a minute for us to read is all they're gonna give us. Or less.

FRED: Yeah. I thought this was a callback? Every actor in town is here.

MINDY: Yes, they are.

FRED: Callback. They're supposed to get down to the final few candidates, and...work us,

y'know, look at us close...

MINDY: That should be the plan.

FRED: Check the chemistry between the final actors, how they look together, y'know...

MINDY: I know. There's more actors at these callbacks than at open auditions.

FRED: Yeah.

MINDY: Did you read last week?

FRED: Yeah, Tuesday.

MINDY: Did they...?

FRED: She said she loved it, I'd be called back and...(gestures)

MINDY: Why so many people at callbacks?

FRED: This is a new company. You know new companies. One production under their belt, they audition for their next one and "Whoa! So many people came to our auditions. We're so good."

MINDY: "And look how many came to our callback!!!"

FRED: "We're so good! Auditions like this town has never seen before!"

(they laugh)

FRED: I hate new theatre companies.

MINDY: Why?

FRED: Cause critics love 'em. They can't get enough of 'em. Can you imagine a new company in New York, Chicago getting any attention? But here, oh! oh! It's a new company! We're going to see theatre like we've never seen before!

(they laugh)

MINDY: There's a lot of new companies.

FRED: One every week. One on every corner.

MINDY: That should mean there should be more roles for us.

FRED: Seems like it. New companies, new plays. New parts.

(with a sigh, they look down at their sides)

JESSICA: Hey, you guys, come on down!

(FRED and MINDY move towards table, audition space)

JESSICA: Thanks so much for being here. Isn't this exciting? You guys all ready, ready to read? Pumped? Make some magic, huh?

(FRED, MINDY nod, murmur)

JESSICA: I can't wait to see what you guys do.

(FRED, MINDY start to take places)

JESSICA: OK, Mindy, here's your new side. You'll read for the neighbor.

MINDY: The neighbor? Who...who's that?

JESSICA: Oh, it's a great part. She's the neighbor! She butts into everything, gets right in the middle of the family's business. And she's so funny.

MINDY: I've been preparing the wife...uh, Rosa...

JESSICA: Yes, and you were so good, but I think you could be a great neighbor!

MINDY: (looking over side) OK.

JESSICA: And Fred, here's your new side.

FRED: The mailman?

JESSICA: Yes, yes, he shows up periodically. Every day, I guess. If you're lucky. And he has these great bits with the neighbor!

FRED: I was reading...I was called back for...uh, Rosa's husband...

JESSICA: Hey, this is what callbacks are for. I had this flash of you as a mailman...(laughs)...so funny, you'll be so great!

FRED: But...

JESSICA: OK, Let's do one.

FRED: Can I...?

JESSICA: Cold read. We have so many people out there to get through. Let's see how this plays. We don't rehearse what we say in life, do we? Life is a cold read. So...go!

(FRED/MINDY exchange looks, take their places)

JESSICA: Anytime.

FRED: Here's your mail, M'am.

MINDY: Oh, thanks. Say, have you noticed anything funny over at the Albertsons?

FRED: Funny?

MINDY: Y'know, kind of...oh, never mind.

FRED: Have a nice day.

(FRED, MINDY look, a little underwhelmed, at JESSICA)

JESSICA: Oh, that's good. So good. Just what I'm looking for. Let's go again, but Fred, could you do, uh...do a Southern accent for the mailman?

FRED: Southern. Doesn't this play take place in Philadelphia?

JESSICA: Just try it once for me.

FRED: OK.

JESSICA: And again.

FRED: (very broad Southern) Here's your mail, M'am.

MINDY: (to Jessica) Sorry, was I supposed to do Southern...

JESSICA: No, no, no. Just pick up from...No, wait, wait. OK. Mindy, in this scene...Janet wants the mailman. She wants him. She's wanted him from that first day he dropped off that first gas bill and that mattress store circular.

MINDY: Oh, so...

JESSICA: She wants him. Show me...just a little bit of that.

MINDY: All right...Uh...

FRED: Should I still do Southern?

JESSICA: Whatever. Let's see it.

FRED: From the top?

JESSICA: Please. We do have a large crowd of this city's most talented and in demand talent out there. Please, do the scene.

FRED: ...the scene...Here's your mail, M'am.

MINDY: (trying to follow direction) Oh...thanks. Say, have you noticed anything...funny...over at the Albertsons?

FRED: Funny?

MINDY: Y'know, kind of...oh, never mind.

FRED: Have a nice day.

JESSICA: Ok, very good, very very good. Now, one more time, please. Only this time, I want the two of you to do it in mime. No words.

MINDY: Mime?

JESSICA: Just act the words out. Physically. OK, let's see it.

(FRED/MINDY exchange looks.)

JESSICA: Go ahead.

(FRED/MINDY they try to go through lines, physically.)

JESSICA: But this time, Mindy. You don't want the mailman. You despise him.

MINDY: I don't want him any...

JESSICA: He is a symbol of all that is wrong in this world. He represents the man, big government. OK, go.

FRED: Mime?

(JESSICA answers with a "Go Go" with her hands. FRED/MINDY mime lines, with new direction)

JESSICA: Thank you, I just had to see how each of you moved, how space shaped your bodies. How you took direction.

All right, now let's dig a little deeper. Into the play.  
Do you have any questions?

FRED: Well...is it, I don't know, kind of a...a traditional family comedy/drama?

JESSICA: Traditional?

FRED: Um, maybe...

JESSICA: Do you know what Company you're auditioning for? Do you have any idea the kind of work we do?

FRED: Isn't this your...second production? I didn't get to see the first...

JESSICA: Yes, yes, but did our mission statement?

FRED: I don't...

JESSICA: It's on our website. You were instructed to read it before you auditioned.

FRED: There were a lot of instructions...

JESSICA: "We are committed to presenting theatre that this city has never seen before."

(FRED/MINDY exchange looks)

JESSICA: "Brave, bold theatre, that touches the heart and challenges the brain. Theatre that screams in the face of sacred cows. (She screams!) Theatre that looks at a script and says...Why? Why do it this way? Why do it that way? Why do it at all? Why?"  
So...the most important word...that you'll be hearing in this process...is...

FRED/MINDY: Why?

JESSICA: No, good guess, but that important word is...money. "Why" is very important, don't get me wrong, but the most important, creative work our company strives to do is fundraising. After all, without money, there's no show. But let's get back to the play.

(JESSICA paces a bit, looks them up and down the point of discomfort)

JESSICA: OK, I want to see what intuitions you have about your characters.  
Mindy, ready?

MINDY: I think so.

JESSICA: OK, Mindy. What kind of soup does your character like?

MINDY: Soup? (JESSICA nods) Soup...the neighbor, or...?

JESSICA: No, Rosa.

MINDY: Uh...uh...chicken noodle?

JESSICA: Chicken noodle? (stares at JESSICA for a moment.)

MINDY: No, uh, tomato!

JESSICA: (stares again) Uh-huh. Good. And Fred?

FRED: Well, he's a big eater, it said so in the side, so I'd guess - uh, vegetable beef, something hearty...

JESSICA: Not the husband, the mailman.

FRED: The mailman...soup...uh...I don't...clam chowder.

JESSICA: (leaps and claps hands) Clam chowder. That's wonderful! All right...Mindy...Rosa...what kind of toothpaste does Rosa use?

MINDY: Rosa. Mmmm...Crest?

JESSICA: O...kay...and Fred, the mailman's toothpaste.

FRED: I don't...Crest, Crest.

JESSICA: Same as Rosa. Interesting. And one more, Mindy, if your character had to rent a car, what kind of vehicle would she rent?

MINDY: Wha...uh...well, I guess Rosa would...

JESSICA: Not Rosa. The neighbor.

MINDY: The neighbor....I...SUV?

JESSICA: OK. (looks at FRED)

FRED: One of those little trucks.

JESSICA: What little...?

FRED: The little mail trucks they use. (JESSICA stares)

JESSICA: Whatever.

FRED: Or did you mean the husband...?

JESSICA: Got it, got it, we're good. OK, very good, you two. Couple more things.



I was checking your conflicts here...Fred, it says you won't be available on April 17, that's a Sunday...you're not working, on a Sunday, are you?

FRED: No, I, uh, uh, it's early in rehearsal, so I thought, that's my Mother's 90th birthday. My sisters are organizing this huge thing. It's gonna be, y'know, friends coming from all over...

JESSICA: Do you have to be there?

FRED: Well, yeah, maybe...

JESSICA: There'll be a 91st birthday party, right?

FRED: Uh...

JESSICA: So. And Mindy...?

MINDY: Yes.

JESSICA: Can you juggle?

MINDY: Juggle?

JESSICA: Juggle. Tennis balls, golf balls, forks...

MINDY: Uh...

JESSICA: If you get the part, that's something you can work on. And, where did I see it on your resume? You do ride horses, yes?

MINDY: I...never...

JESSICA: We haven't decided on the horses yet. All right, guys. Good, good work. We'll be having second callbacks on the 21st.

FRED: Second...

JESSICA: See you then. Thanks! Bye! Love you!  
(JESSICA goes back, sits at table.)

FRED: Second callback. Are you going to go?

MINDY: (thinks a second) She said she loves us.

FRED: Yeah, I guess.

(as they leave)

MINDY: Do you have any tennis balls I can borrow?

THE END