

ACTING SENATOR

A Short Play

By Mike Folie

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ACTING SENATOR

CHARACTERS:

SENATOR BARBARA JENKINS, A U.S. senator.

SAM ROBINSON, an attorney, can be played by a man or a woman.

JENNIFER MYERS, an actor.

SETTING:

An office. A table, two chairs. An intercom on the desk.

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AT RISE:

SENATOR BARBARA JENKINS and HER attorney, SAM ROBINSON, sit at a table with an intercom. *[NOTE: parentheses within dialogue indicate where that line is overlapped by the next line of dialogue.]*

ROBINSON

Send in the next auditioner, please.

(JENNIFER MYERS enters, all smiles)

MYERS

Hi!

ROBINSON

(Looking at HER resume)

Jennifer Myers? Correct?

MYERS

That's right.

(SHE stands there and smiles while THEY study HER. MYERS begins to get uncomfortable.)

MYERS (CONT.)

Uh, would you like to hear a monologue, or . . . or something? (I . . .)

ROBINSON

Shhhhhhh!

(THEY continue to stare. Finally)

Well, Senator? What do you think?

JENKINS

I still don't understand why we can't get Meryl Streep?

ROBINSON

(Sighs, they've been through this)

Meryl Streep is a big movie star, Senator. We need an unknown.

Acting Senator

MYERS

Senator? Ohmygod! You're that Senator! The one who took all those bribes!

JENKINS

Those were legitimate campaign contributions!.

ROBINSON

It's a gray area, Jennifer.

MYERS

"Gray area" my foot! She broke the law! Why don't you guys vote some money for the arts in this country, instead of lining your own pockets all (the time?)

JENKINS

This one's a troublemaker, Sam. Get rid of (her.)

ROBINSON

She's a feisty lady all right, Senator. Just like you are.

JENKINS

Hm.

ROBINSON

Jennifer, we're looking for someone to play Senator Jenkins, and my instincts tell me you may be the right actress for this job.

MYERS

You mean, play her as a young woman?

JENKINS

Excuse me?!

ROBINSON

Shhhh!

(To JENNIFER)

To stand in for her at a Senate hearing. We're looking for an actress to play Senator Jenkins at the televised Ethics Committee Hearings scheduled to begin next week.

MYERS

But . . . but everyone will know I'm not her!

ROBINSON

Yes. But it's become an accepted convention in Washington to hire actors for this sort of appearance. Ever since actress Helen Marshall began standing in for Hillary Clinton.

MYERS

You mean, that isn't Hillary Clinton on TV?

Acting Senator

(JENKINS and ROBINSON laugh)

JENKINS

Hillary Clinton is three hundred pounds and ugly as sin!

ROBINSON

I'm afraid Ms. Clinton isn't aging very well. So her staff has hired, Ms. Marshall, a very talented actress and a very attractive woman, to play Ms. Clinton in public.

MYERS

But . . . doesn't the media . . . ?

ROBINSON

Oh, the media much prefer to have good-looking people on TV. They're always happy to play along.

MYERS

But . . . but, that's wrong!

ROBINSON

Why? We hire lawyers to represent us in court. Why not actors to represent us on TV?.

JENKINS

If only this had been available in Dick Nixon's time . . .

MYERS

But Hilary Clinton is ...

(THEY simply stare at HER. SHE gasps.)

Ohmygod! You don't mean . . . ?

ROBINSON

Playing Ms. Clinton has become a full-time career for Jessica Marshall. And playing Senator Jenkins could also be a long-term assignment for you, too.

MYERS

I don't believe this!

ROBINSON

Initially you would play Senator Jenkins before the Ethics Committee, on the Sunday morning TV news shows and, if necessary, at trial.

MYERS

I . . . I wouldn't know what to say.

Acting Senator

ROBINSON

We would give you a small electronic device to wear in your ear.

MYERS

So the Senator would speak to me over the ear piece and tell me what to say?

ROBINSON

Of course not. I would speak to you over the ear piece and tell you what to say.

MYERS

This is the most . . . dishonest, the most scandalous thing I have ever heard of!

(To JENKINS)

You! You're simply hiding from justice. I'm ashamed of you. You make me ashamed to be a woman.

(To ROBINSON)

And you're even worse.! You rich D.C. lawyers with your thousand dollar suits and limousines. You must think the American people are nothing but a nation of idiots who'll swallow anything. But the American people are better than that, sir! They are good, hard-working folks who believe in honesty and justice. They will not stand for your deceitful manipulations. And neither, I am very proud to say, will I. Good day!

(SHE stalks off. Pause. ROBINSON and JENKINS look at each other and sigh, lamenting the loss ROBINSON is about to signal for the next auditioner when MYERS sticks HER head back in.)

MYERS (CONT.)

How was that?

(JENKINS and ROBINSON applaud.)

JENKINS

Brava! Stunning!

ROBINSON

The job is yours!

(As THEY exit.)

ROBINSON (CONT.)

You'll have to move to D.C. immediately. But we'll take very good care of you.

Acting Senator

MYERS

Limousines? Expensive clothes? A Georgetown Co-op?

JENKINS

All that and more, darling.

ROBINSON

Welcome aboard, Jennifer

MYERS

Who says the government doesn't support the arts?

(Blackout)

THE END