



STAGE BLOCKING

Elizabeth Tock

an **Academy27** *production*



Stage Blocking
by Elizabeth Tock

"Keep your chin up kiddo." Uncle Clarence said as he drove me to the school, "Don't let one little setback snuff out the fire in you."

"Do we have a backup school to enroll me in, in case I get expelled?" I asked flatly.

"Amelia, what would your mother say if she caught you talking about yourself like that?" he asked in return.

"Make me find positive things about myself or the situation, probably." I said with a groan.

"Alright then, try to find five positives from this." he said, about as unsure as I felt.

I thought about it for a minute, "Um... I proved I'm a good team player where it counts?"

"That's one." he said, somewhat excited.

"I proved I can stand up for myself." I continued.

"For sure. That's two." he replied.

"I showed I'm good at my holo set designs?" I said racking my brain to finish the exercise.

"Yeah, we can count that one I guess." he said with a chuckle.

"We made a scene in front of several people, so someone may stick up for me." It was a positive for me and I was sticking to it.

"I'm not sure that's exactly a positive." he replied, trying to decide if he needed to backpedal or not.

"I learned I can take a hit?" This one was definitely a stretch, but I couldn't think of anything else.

"You're nervous this morning so I'll allow it." Uncle Clarence said with a smirk. As he dropped me off at the main entrance he turned to give me a hug, "We'll get this

figured out. But heavens forbid you do get expelled, I am looking into some other schools with openings."

For being new to this whole parental figure thing, he was doing pretty good so far. "Thanks Uncle Clarence."

He gave me a cheesy grin, "Stick to your guns, Brightman's don't give up! But if something happens, call me and I'll be right over." I nodded and with that he drove off.

As I walked into homeroom early the next morning, Mrs. Ichinose met me at the door. "How's the eye?"

"It's fine." I lied as it was still throbbing like crazy.

"I heard you and Hanzo had a... lively weekend." she started, treading carefully, "I've got some ice in my office if you want to talk about it?"

"I'm sure Hanzo's told everyone by now." I said coldly as we made our way to her office.

"Hanzo will get to tell me his side later. We're talking now." she said kindly, "How'd all this start?"

"Well it all began when we moved here." I started, putting the ice pack on my eye.

* * *

"Mr. Brightman," the steward said, "we should be landing on the planet shortly."

"Thank you." Uncle Clarence said in his businessman voice. "I hear Mars is lovely this time of year."

"Gongen." I said, eyes fixed on the second act of Shakespeare's *As You Like It*.

"Come again?" Uncle Clarence asked, confused.

"It's not Mars anymore." I repeated, looking up from my book, "The people who live there call it Gongen. I thought you knew that?"

He chuckled at that, "You read too much Kitten. Nothing's official yet, and I don't see it being true any time soon."

"No, no, no. We gotta talk about that." I said firmly, "Please stop calling me 'Kitten', I've heard you call too many of your girlfriends that for me to ever be comfortable with it."

"Yep, you're definitely Emily's kid." he said with a smirk, "Well what's an acceptable nickname for you then Ms. Ameila? I want us to be friends, not strangers."

"I mean," I said hesitating, "We kind of are strangers. Up until mom died, you were just a name on Birthday and Christmas cards."

"I know." he said slightly under his breath, "I don't have any excuse for not being in your life more. But I'm here now, and I'm going to try to be the best guardian and uncle I can be. So, what should I call you?"

I smiled at that, "Call me Mel."

As far as fresh starts went, it could have been worse. I could have been sent to an Earth orphanage. Mom died last year in the crossfire of a gang shootout; wrong place, wrong time as the police explained it to me. Something about some lowlifes trying to get in with the Cartel and getting in on the Ebon Gate's turf. Thankfully those responsible were dealt with. Not that any of their explanations or justice helped when I was standing alone in front of her casket.. With no dad in the picture, it was going to be a bleak outlook for me if Uncle Clarence hadn't taken me in. Yeah he was a stock boy for *Feeding the Stars*, but he wasn't a serial killer. That's what counts.

Getting back into Theater at a new school, on a new planet, with a new head actor who was the director's pet.... That was going to be the challenge. And up until about a month before "Parents Night", it was.

* * *

"Mel," Mrs. Ichinose said awkwardly, "I meant why don't you start at the beginning of what led to yours and Hanzo's... disagreement the other night."

"Right, sorry." I replied, "Well, it started when Mr. Shevchenko put Jorani in charge of the Parent's Night play."

* * *

"... a-and it's going to be a story a-about the founding of Gongen. S-So, what do you say? Will you help?" Jorani asked.

Obviously, I hesitated, "So... You're asking me to help with a theater production; when Hanzo basically forbade me from setting foot in there like my presence was going to defile the auditorium somehow?"

"Y-Yes." she replied nervously.

"You sure about this?" I was honestly waiting for this to be a prank. Hanzo is the golden boy who walks around like he owns the school. A real top of the line jerk.

"I-If you don't want to h-help, I can ask s-someone else." she stammered, "I j-just know you had b-been interested before?"

"No, no Jorani, I'll do it. I just don't want you to get in trouble with Hanzo. He's a talented guy," I hated to say it but it was still true, "but Mr. Shevchenko's given him way too much power in the department with too big an ego to go with it. I don't want Hanzo to say you're a traitor to Gongen or something just because you let me work on a show."

"I t-think we'll be okay." She replied, "It's the Parent's Night s-show, Hanzo thinks something s-so small is 'beneath his talent.' He likely w-won't even set foot in the auditorium while we're r-rehearsing for that."

"Mel, you're still not talking about the other night." Mrs. Ichinose said.

"Sorry." I repeated, "Um, right up until dress rehearsal, Jorani was right. Hanzo was more focused on Mr. Shevchenko's big show and getting his next big role on a holodrama than our show for the Parent's."

"What changed that?" she asked.

"Sang Mi opened her big mouth." I replied through gritted teeth, "The hologram set program was acting buggy, so I asked her if she could take a look at it. She ran into Hanzo after she fixed it and told him what the show was. And as patriotic as he is-"

"He wanted to be in the show as a main founder of Gongen." Mrs. Ichinose finished.

"Exactly." I replied. "Mr. Shevchenko told him Jorani was the boss of this show, so the best he could do was be made an understudy. So Hanzo started sitting in on rehearsals, which was okay until he started complaining that the set designs for shows he was in didn't look as good as our set did."

"Quite the compliment." Mrs. Ichinose said.

I snorted, "Yeah, but he didn't know I was the set designer. Let alone who Jorani had made the Assistant Stage Manager."

"I see. What did he do then?" Mrs. Ichinose asked.

I rolled my good eye, "He started throwing a fit."

"How could you sully the honor of Gongen by bringing an Earther into our theater! We're fighting for our independence and you bring scum like her into our beautiful sanctuary to the arts!" Hanzo shouted.

"S-She goes to our school. S-She lives on Gongen..." Jorani said meekly. "B-Besides, you j-just said her set design was g-good..."

"That's no excuse!" he fumed.

I'd had enough of his high and mighty bullshit and him yelling at Jorani when I was his problem, "Hanzo you want a fight, fight with me. Jorani was just doing the job Shevchenko gave her." I snapped.

"I'm not talking to you." Hanzo started.

"What? You can't finish what you started?" I retorted. "You call me the enemy, yet I've gone out of my way to correct people who call this planet 'Mars' instead of by its rightful name Gongen, I've called my new home by its true name since day one. You've shunned me from the one place I hold as much reverence as you, and you know what Hanzo? If your xenophobic ass would have even let someone like me in, I would make your shows look this good too!"

"And what happened after that?" Mrs. Ichinose asked.

My eye throbbed remembering it, "He didn't have a comeback, and I'd embarrassed him in front of everyone. So he punched me."

"Did you try to punch him back?" she asked.

"Nope. I'm only dumb enough to call someone twice my size names, not try to physically fight them." I said with a slight chuckle.

"Then how did he hurt his hand?"

I gave her a big grin, "I ducked when he threw the second punch and he hit the wall behind me."

School Announcements

NEXT TIME!

So, I heard through the grapevine—and by the grapevine I mean that Sang Mi told me at Track Practice—by the way hi girl! You better get your time down in the second lap of your 800 meter run or Coach is gunna be maaaaaad. Anyway as I was saying I heard that Tsetseg Sansar is working at a Coffee Shop—how’d that happen?

And not to mention I’ve heard talk that some sort of famous Maverick, like... Mack Milgress? Jack Bildess? Wack Wilgress? Something like that, he’s been spotted in Takumi! I wonder what that’s all about? I’m sure it couldn’t have anything to do with the coffee shop thing, that’d be too wild. Wishing you luck, Tsetseg!

And—Sorry Mr. Mori! No, you don’t have to yell I’ll get back to the real announcements... ahem. The Maths Club is recruiting! Like maths? Well, so do they I guess!. Oh, they have a tag line for me to read: “One plus one is two, but one plus fun in our club is you!” Well, that’s kind of cute. Anyway.

Till next time, I’m your announcer from the Broadcast Club, Hee Jin!

Tune in Next Week For:

Coffee, Warm

By James Wylder

New Academy 27 stories will drop each Thursday!

Read past stories and learn more about Academy 27 at:

ArcbeatlePress.com/A27

BONUS FEATURE:

The Gang Put on the Great Journey for Parents Night, Mostly

By James Wylder, Sean Dillon, Callum Phillpott, and Molly Warton

Dramatis Personae:

Higen Haruto (son of the inventor of Shocho, Higen Shijen) - played by Honda Shinji

Andriy Boyko (founder of Lybid, terraforming expert) - played by Ihor Shevchenko

Frederick Weinberg (CEO of DynCorp) - played by Helena Kiner, in drag

Shocho (the Planetary AI of Gongen) - voice role played by (unimportant, clearly)

Secretary for Frederick Weinberg - Zhyrgal Osomonova

Staff:

Filming Director - Cao Li Xiu

Camera Operator - Anonymous

Student Play Director - Jorani Ruoy

Sets and Props - Amelia

SCENE 1

(There is a theater. We can see the heads of people above the seat backs. A few are bumbling around, moving past the other theater goers to get to their seats—tiny drones leading them to their spots. The curtains are blue, and are closed on the stage. It feels like this shot should be framed closer to the stage.)

CAMERA GUY

Can't I just... zoom in already?

DIRECTOR (CAO LI XIU)

No, not yet. We want the ambiance of the theater being filled. The mood being set.

As the lights go down, we'll zoom in. It'll be perfect.

CAMERA GUY

Okay uh... usually we just set the camera down and let it film? I don't really know how to do this stuff—

LI XIU

Oh for heaven's sake—ugh.

(There is a jostling sound, and the camera zooms in carefully as the lights go down.)

LI XIU
Very Stephen Spielberg.

(The Camera Guy sighs. The curtains open. An actor steps out on stage—one entirely unfamiliar, because this is Senior acting star HONDA SHINJI playing HIGEN HARUTO.)

HIGEN HARUTO

It was difficult to care about the seasons when every one was a nuclear winter. Our home was in ruin, my mother was gone, and when the rocket took off to start what should have been our new life...

(The curtains open, and the stage—a mix of real props and carefully projected holograms, is revealed. A holographic rocket takes off, and the other members of the cast walk out from the wings to form a V-Shape behind Higen.)

HIGEN HARUTO

My father didn't survive the crossing across the stars. The Great Journey has begun, and I began it alone.

ANDRIY BOYKO (Ihor Shevchenko)
(stepping forward)
But he would not be alone forever.

FREDERICK WEINBERG (Helena Kiner, dressed as a boy)
And the machinations of Earth would follow him there.

(There is an extremely long pause.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG
I said, and the machinations of Earth would follow him there.

(There is an even longer pause. There is the sound of someone yelling, and something being thrown, and then a chair scraping along the floor and a microphone being slammed down on a table before someone is thrown down into it.)

SHOCHO (Jhe Sang Mi)

...And (she gives a deep sigh) the Great Journey was only truly just beginning for any of them. Can I go back to track practice now—

(The curtains close. End of scene 1)

SCENE 2

(The lights go up, revealing a big desk at the center of the stage. It is littered with various nicknacks - pen holders, toy dinosaurs, that little thing with 5 balls that goes clack clack clack - some of which fell off while the desk was being moved. The desk has a wheel on each leg, meaning the person sitting behind it - Helena - has to hold on to it so it doesn't roll away. She presses a button on the desk and a beep can be heard.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG
Secretary, come to my office.

(Enter Secretary, played by Zhyrgal Osomonova.)

SECRETARY
Yes?

FREDERICK WEINBERG
Tell me what you've heard about that little *Mars* colony. I want to see if you've been paying attention.

(The Secretary pulls out a tablet.)

SECRETARY
Well, apparently they've been experiencing flooding.

FREDERICK WEINBERG
Flooding?

SECRETARY
Mhm, one of their drills broke down.

FREDERICK WEINBERG
I see. And you learnt about this *when*?

SECRETARY

A few days ago, I guess.

FREDERICK WEINBERG

And yet, despite being my secretary, you've only told me about this *now*?

(Helena slams her fist after a slight delay. She nearly relaxes, but then the desk starts rolling away and she has to grab it again. One of the pen holders falls to the ground. The Secretary tries to make an audible gulping sound, but it ends up sounding more like a cow with their lips glued together. Helena gets up, but ends up having to lean down again to keep the desk still.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

I'll tell you something, and I want you to remember it. This company was founded on two simple words: Humanitarian. *Aid*.

SECRETARY

Humanitarian Aid?

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Yes.

SECRETARY

But what does it mean?

(Helena looks at the whiteboard on the other side of the stage. A pause. She can't just bring the desk there, she'd look ridiculous! She looks down at the desk. Experimentally, she takes her hand away... it's still! She nearly cheers, but remembers that it wouldn't be in character. Calmly, she walks up to the whiteboard...)

(... and the desk starts moving.)

(Helena writes down "Humanitarian Aid" in English)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Whoever *acts* humanitarian, *gets* the aid! In my country, we call that a *Quid Prock*.

SECRETARY

Surely it can't be that si—

(The Secretary is winded as the desk crashes into them. Helena rushes back to pull the desk back into its starting position. The back and forth has clearly winded her.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

It *is*— (exhausted breath) that SIMPLE. Simple.

(Helena starts leaning on the desk, only for it to slip away and cause her to fall. The audience verbally winces. Helena gets up and is clearly at her limit. In frustration, she kicks the desk off-stage - a faint “Ouch!” can be heard)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

It is that simple. Now, secretary, I want you to call up Higen Haruto and tell him we’re sending over a fleet of our patented robots to help out with the flooding.

SECRETARY

Are you sure?

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Sure as silver. And tell him I’m sending over ten Stocks of money.

SECRETARY

Ten Stocks!?!

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Do y— did— FU— did I stutter?

(A pause.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Well? Go!

(The Secretary nods and starts to leave.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Oh, and give him...

(She looks down where the desk should be. *Right*. Quickly, she darts off-stage to grab one of the little toy dinosaurs off the desk. Winded again, she hands it to the secretary.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Give him *this*. It represents our company - ferocious, powerful, the apex of—

(She pauses as she recognises a familiar sound - *the wheels*. She turns and sees the desk peeking out from behind the curtains, then it leaps out, it starts gaining speed)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

APEXOFTHESPECIES, END SCENE END SCENE!

(The lights go out, and the two can be heard running away. The desk follows, gradually gaining speed until it violently crashes into the wall. A pause.)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

WHAT DO YOU MEAN THE DESK HAD BRAKES!?!

SCENE 3

(a sort of sofa adorns the stage. It is not a very good one, but it is clearly meant to be a sort of chaise longue or however you spell it, judging by the way that Honda is reclining upon it)

(enter Helena, dressed in a wig, and walking rather strangely)

HIGEN HARUTO

Ah, secretary, wonderful – put my papers on my desk, would you?

LI XIU

(whispering)

Alright, now, zoom in on the papers – the papers, I tell you!

CAMERA GUY

What papers?

LI XIU

Oh, I'll do it!

CAMERA GUY

Oy!

(The camera jolts slightly, and the camera focuses in on Helena's empty hand)

LI XIU

Wait, where are the papers?

(Helena looks panicked, and rushes off-screen, returning briefly with the papers, wig slightly askew. She lays them on the table)

FREDERICK WEINBURG

Of course, sir. Anything else?

HIGEN HARUTO

No, that should be all.

(Helena heads towards the door)

HIGEN HARUTO

Hang on, wait a second, will you? There's something I wanted to ask.

FREDERICK WEINBURG

(curtseying)

Yes, sir?

HIGEN HARUTO

I've heard reports of an Earther spy amongst us, and that nobody has seen Frederick Weinburg, the CEO of DynCorp, for several weeks. We think she might... dammit... we think *he* might be amongst the staff.

(Helena attempts to look alarmed, but instead merely looks mildly constipated)

HIGEN HARUTO

I don't suppose you know of anyone who it might be?

FREDERICK WEINBURG

(relieved)

No, sir, I can't think of anybody, but I'll have a think... Is that all?

(Honda gets up and walks over to the window.

There is no window.)

HIGEN HARUTO

Well, there was something else I wanted to talk to you about.

FREDERICK WEINBURG

What is it?

HIGEN HARUTO

(forcefully)

It's rather hot in here, is it not? Perhaps I should open the window.

(Honda, displeased, mimes opening the window. He pretends to lean on the non-existent windowsill)

HIGEN HARUTO

Come closer, so that I may see your eyes.

(Helena turns, and moves towards Honda. They gaze into each other's eyes)

HIGEN HARUTO

What beautiful eyes you have. Such incandescent open windows into the soul.

FREDERICK WEINBURG

Should there be a window, sir, I am not sure that you would like what you would see.

HIGEN HARUTO

Your modesty compliments you.

FREDERICK WEINBURG

Thank you, sir.

HIGEN HARUTO

Please, call me Higen.

(there is an awkward pause)

HIGEN HARUTO

I suppose what I want to say – what I'm trying to say – is that I love you.

(slowly, tenderly, Honda pulls Helena towards him. Quite whether this was something that happened in rehearsals is unclear, but Honda and Helena are now passionately kissing, both seeming to enjoy it rather a lot.

Honda forgets that the window is not there)

HIGEN HARUTO

Aargh!

FREDERICK WEINBURG

(on the floor lying on top of Higen, somewhat breathlessly)

Oh!

(Amelia what does the props rushes in with the window, positioning it above Honda and Helena

Honda gets up)

HIGEN HARUTO

Ow!

(Honda lies down again.

Enter Ihor)

ANDRIY BOKYO

Oh!... I mean, uh, am I disturbing you, Higen?

HIGEN HARUTO

(groaning)

No, no... not at all!

ANDRIY BOKYO

Is there any progress on the Weinburg business?

HIGEN HARUTO

No – no, I'm afraid not. But she must – I mean *he* must – be stopped! Leave us please, Alice.

(Exit Helena)

ADRIY BOKYO
Nice girl, isn't she?

HIGEN HARUTO
Yes. Yes, I rather think he is... *D'oh!*

Intermission

ANNOUNCER

There will be a fifteen minute intermission before we resume the Academy 27 production of *The Great Journey*.

(The camera pans around the audience to see a well packed, though not completely sold out theater. The shot moves a bit too quickly to see anything for too long, but not too quick as to be a complete blur.)

CAMERA GUY

Are you sure this is ok? I feel like we should have a permit for something like this.

LI XIU

What, of course it's fine. We're shooting guerrilla style! As long as we don't record anything too spicy, it should be fine.

(Li Xiu seems disquietingly excited about the prospect of recording something too spicy)

CAMERA GUY

If you say so.

(Under breath)

The paycheck is coming. The paycheck is coming.

(The camera finally stops on a couple getting up to leave. They are dressed shockingly well for what is essentially a High School production. The man has a dark black tuxedo with a black bowtie and a white undershirt. He has a gray military haircut and a thick, bushy, mustache. The woman is dressed in a sparkling red dress that goes all the way to the ground. She has short, blonde hair that goes up to her shoulders.)

LI XIU

Come on, let's follow them!

CAMERA GUY

Er, I don't think-- I mean, I don't even know how to take this off the tripod prop--

(The camera jostles a bit before being effortlessly lifted upwards.)

CAMERA GUY

Uh...

LI XIU

What? It's not broken is it?

CAMERA GUY

(Resigned to his fate)

...No.

(The camera moves through the theater: We see Sang Eun with Bashrat, Lizzah, and Tsetseg, having a heated discussion about the play we can't overhear. We pass Mrs. Ichinose and her wife, who are showing each other memes on their phones. And we pass JackBox, who has come to see the play to support her friends but is currently having to show a security guard who has come over to her seat her papers to prove that as a Maverick she's allowed in the city limits.. We exit the theater and head into the modest lobby with a small concession stand. It is being run by a man whose face is obscured by the top of the frame. The couple is standing at the booth, talking with the man at the concession stand.)

LI XIU

(Whisper)

Do you have a Chakk Mic?

CAMERA GUY

(Frantic whisper)

Why would I have one of those??? Am I supposed to have one of those???

LI XIU

I just assumed everyone on a film shoot had one of those.

CAMERA GUY

Well this is a theater recording! I thought we didn't need one of those because the actors ARE ALREADY MICED!

LI XIU

Calm down, I brought my own.

CAMERA GUY

Then why did you ask if I had one?

LI XIU

Well, it's low on battery. I... forgot to charge it?

(The camera looks at the couple in silence for at least twenty-seven seconds. The man at the concession stand grabs two popcorns and a drink.)

CAMERA GUY

If I find out that you were filming with MY camera without MY supervision, I'm going to end you.

(The camera jostles around, still aimed at the couple. The couple begins to move away from the stand and head to a nearby corner. The camera follows them and is safely put behind a plant. The man is captured in frame while the woman is blocked by the plant.)

MAN (DYLAN)

Are you having a fun night, Jeanne?

WOMAN (JEANNE)

I guess. It's a bit crap though.

DYLAN

What do you mean?

JEANNE

Well, for starters the kid who's playing Boyko can't emote worth a damn. It always looks like he's three seconds away from falling asleep. The sets look like garbage, probably would've been better off with a black box. And don't get me started on the garish lighting! I'm pretty sure by the final show, half the cast will be blind.

DYLAN

Well, I suppose. But it's kids' theater. They're not going to be great, but—

JEANNE

That doesn't mean they have to be complete shit! If these kids are the future, then things are looking pretty bleak.

(Dylan looks down at his feet.)

JEANNE

I honestly don't see why we even came here, Dylan. Surely we could've seen a proper performance of The Great Journey. The Marston had friggin Matt Jones as Weinberg! I'm sure I could've snagged us some tickets!

DYLAN

Well... It's just...

(Jeanne gets a bit closer to Dylan. Her expression is hidden by the plant.)

DYLAN

Nevermind.

JEANNE

No. Say what's on your mind.

DYLAN

It's not important.

JEANNE

It clearly is important, if it's got you all so worked up about it.

(There is a short pause.)

JEANNE

Is it about that meeting you had last week?

(Dylan looks up at Jeanne. The camera zooms in on his teary face. There are no tears pouring down it, but it looks like they're coming close.)

DYLAN

The kids look like they're having fun, wouldn't you say?

JEANNE
I suppose...

DYLAN

(Trying to keep the tears in, but failing by the end. Coherent throughout.)
And I'm going to kill them soon. I'm going to kill them all. It's not going to be my hands or my weapons or even just my orders that ultimately does them in. But it's going to be me all the same. You know, Kyle said that I worry about this sort of thing a bit too much. That I should just let it go, move on, and accept what's coming. It's not even that I'm important in all of this. But I'm still a part of it. Still part of the bureaucracy that's going to get them all killed. I just... I want to see them have fun, you know. Before it's all over. God, they don't even know, do they? They're just kids. They're kids and they don't even know that they're going to die soon. I think I'm the only one who cares. Kyle, Philip, Jo, Li. They all just see the machine. They don't...
And there's nothing I can do to stop it. The war's already started. They're already dead.

(The couple stand quietly in their little corner.)

DYLAN
Do you... No, never mind.

JEANNE
NO! I... I mean, no, what?

DYLAN
(Contemplative)
I was just thinking... Do you think... Do you think there are high school plays like this one... going on on Earth?

LI XIU
(Overlapping "going on on Earth?")
We got enough footage. We should probably cut he—

(End Intermission)

Scene 4

(We are back where we started—a shot of the stage, framed so we can see the people filing in.)

LI XIU

We really didn't need to review the footage yet.

CAMERA GUY

Well... we did and just...

LI XIU

Just what?

CAMERA GUY

What do you think about what those two were saying, do you really think—

LI XIU

Psh, my parents have had dinner with Howard Martin. You know, THE Howard Martin.

CAMERA GUY

...I know who Howard Martin is.

LI XIU

You know, the Diplomat.

CAMERA GUY

I still know who he is.

LI XIU

The famous one.

CAMERA GUY

Still got it.

LI XIU

Anyway there are a lot of really smart and powerful people working around the clock to stop war from coming between the planets. War is expensive, and the Central Governance Corporation back on Earth wants profits above all. The Atarashi Hajimari wants to posture and look powerful, but they don't really want to challenge the iCom space fleet. Things will work out.

(There is a long silence, people finish filing back in after intermission. Finally, Camera Guy speaks before the play resumes.)

CAMERA GUY
...I sure hope so.

SCENE 5

(Higen Haruto paces back and forth. The extremely well made holo-set of his office has spectacular detail. A red glowing electronic eye shines from the wall behind him.)

HIGEN HARUTO
...And with Takumi's Main Dome under construction, our planet finally has its foundations laid down.

SHOCHO
(still Sang Mi, but someone gave her a sandwich between acts and she's trying a lot more now)
Affirmative. We have persevered, and now our people are thriving on our red soil.

FREDERICK WEINBERG
(leaping out from a closet)
AHA! That's what you thought. You foolish Marsians, you really thought that Earth would let you... uh.
(there is a pause)
Line?

JORANI RUOY (Director)
(from offstage)
Have your freedom!

FREDERICK WEINBERG
Have your freedom!

HIGEN HARUTO
But what I didn't anticipate was that... when you stole those plans for the Cheonsa Dome's air filtration system... you stole my heart, too!

SHOCHO
Wait, that isn't in the script? Are we using a different script?

(Helena, still putting on the voice but seeming too into this, runs towards Shinji)

FREDERICK WEINBERG

I've seen you across the lunchroom for so long Shin–Haruto. I've longed for your embrace.

(They clutch at each other)

HIGEN HARUTO

As I've longed for yours.

SHOCHO

Sorry, could someone give me the real script?

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Damn it, kiss me again already. Like you did in act one.

(Shinji reaches out, and gently tilts her chin up as he leans down)

HIGEN HARUTO

I'll kiss you often, and well. And as much as you want me to.

FREDERICK WEINBERG

Then stop talking about it already and do it.

(The pair kiss. There is applause, and then it gets somewhat awkward as the pair continue to just make out on stage.)

JORANI RUOY

Curtains! Close the curtains!

(The curtains close. The audience sits there in confusion for a moment, before a girl in a track and field practice outfit is shoved out on stage.)

SANG MI (formerly SHOCHO)

(talking to Jorani off stage)

What the hell am I supposed to say?

JORANI RUOY

I d-d-don't know! Improvise!

(She looks out at the audience, and freezes there for a moment.)

SANG MI

Uhhh....

(She panics, and says the first thing that comes to her head)

SANG MI

Well you know what they say, if you love someone you're not supposed to... blame it on Rio!

(She does jazz hands. There is extremely light applause.)

LI XIU

That girl can't tell a joke to save her life.

(The cast come out for a curtain call. They bow, everyone applauds a lot because these are their kids so of course they're applauding regardless of quality. The camera freeze frames on various members of the cast, with text inserted over their images...)

Helena Kiner and Honda Shinji: Helena and Shinji dated for two weeks before breaking up. Rumors say he kept asking her to do the Frederick voice in private.

Amelia: Amelia won three awards for her holographic sets, which should make that Jeanne lady feel really silly and I hope she sees this and feels bad!

Sang Mi: Sang Mi was not funny, and any boys who are into her should realize they can do better. A lot better. Maybe even land an aspiring director. You know, just saying.

Zhyrgal Osmonova: Continued to feed the chickens on the roof after school. Which is a weird hobby but go off.

Ihor Shevchenko: Got chewed out by his dad during intermission for not trying hard enough in Act 1, and really stepped it up in Act 2 so good for him.

Hanzo: Only got to play the role of the messenger boy in Act 2.

Jorani Ruoy: Was asked to take on even more work by the theater department and for some reason agreed to it. Get some backbone, girl.

(The scene fades out, and we're greeted by a picture of CAO LI XIU, taken by a professional photographer at a park as she looks wistfully into the distance.)

Cao Li Xiu: The beautiful, talented, and incredible Cao Li Xiu remained beloved by her classmates, and would doubtless go on to be the most talented director of her day. She is also funnier than Sang Mi.

(The picture fades to black, and the recording ends)

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