

INT. STAGE - THEATER – EVENING

MIKE (O.S.)

Intimidating. Isn't it? Do you have any idea who walked these boards before you?

(Beat.)

Geraldine Page, Marlon Brando, Helen Hayes, Jason Robards... And now you. Riggan Thomson.

RIGGAN

Thanks for coming on such short notice, Mike. I appreciate it.

MIKE

Hey. This is what we do.

(Indicates a script.)

So, you wrote this adaptation?

RIGGAN

I did.

MIKE

And you're directing the adaptation and starring...

RIGGAN

I am.

MIKE

Ambitious.

RIGGAN

Thank you.

MIKE

Why don't we do a bit of it?

RIGGAN

Hey, I wasn't expecting you to--

MIKE

First preview is tomorrow, right?

RIGGAN

Yeah, but you can go on with the script until you feel comfortable—

MIKE

Let's just do some of it.

RIGGAN

Take a look at page twenty—

MIKE

Yeah. I don't need that.

RIGGAN

What?

MIKE

I don't need the script. Just give me a cue.

RIGGAN

What are you talking about?

MIKE

Feed me a line.

RIGGAN

I don't-- What?

MIKE

Feed. Me. A line.

RIGGAN

"I'm the wrong person to ask. I didn't know the man. I've only heard his name mentioned in passing. I wouldn't know. You'd have to know the particulars. But I think what you're saying is that love is absolute."

MIKE

Am I saying that love is absolute?

"Yeah. The kind of love I'm talking about is. The kind of love I'm talking about you--"

(An intense pause.)

Well, you don't try to kill people.

RIGGAN

How do you know the lines?

MIKE

I have a thing, a whatever, a gift.

(A beat.)

Come on, I helped Lesley get off book. Hey, give me that cue again.

RIGGAN

"I'm the wrong person to ask. I didn't know the man. I've only heard his name mentioned in passing. I wouldn't know. You'd have to know the particulars. But I think what you're saying is--"

MIKE

Okay, can I-- Do you mind if I—

RIGGAN

No, go ahead.

MIKE

Follow me. He says, "I'm the wrong person to ask." What's his intention? Is he fed up with the topic? Deflecting? Guilt about his wife maybe? Then four sentences all say the same thing... "I didn't even know the man." "I've only heard his name mentioned in passing." "I wouldn't know." "You'd have to know the particulars." First of all, particulars? What are you, my grandmother? But the point is, YOU DON'T KNOW THE GUY, WE FUCKING GET IT. Make it one line. "I didn't even know the guy." Right? ...

RIGGAN

You pretty much know my lines too, huh?

MIKE

Can we-- Are we doing something here? Come on let's go. Cut it down, give it to me again.

RIGGAN

"I'm the wrong person to ask--"

MIKE

Oh, right, sorry, you see? "I'm the wrong person to ask?" That's another fuck you. "Don't put me on the spot. Don't make me self conscious about my marriage when my wife is sitting right here..." See? Give it to me. Give me a good fuck you. Come on...

RIGGAN

Okay, let me—

MIKE

Come on. Give it to me right now. Fuck me. Right now. Right here. Let's do it.

RIGGAN

Okay, yeah...

MIKE

DO IT!

RIGGAN

"Hey. I'm the wrong person to ask, okay? I didn't even know the guy. So what's your point?"

MIKE

"What's my point?"

RIGGAN

"What's your point? What are you saying? Spit it out. You're saying, what? That love is an absolute?"

MIKE

(Exploding.)

"Yeah! Alright? The kind of love I'm talking about is absolute. The kind of love I'm talking about you--

(A painful memory.)

Well, you don't try to kill people. So what do you think, boss? Do I have a job?