

Sabina Piersol
sabmami@gmail.com

What's In A Name?

Characters:

Jon (Christian), a casting director. rocking the 70s look, kind of a dick/arrogant at first

Cass (Nina): bubbly and friendly. formal training as a dramatic actress. new in town, new-ish to auditioning, very genuine

Maggie (Jessica): starts out competitive/confident, trying to play the game and kiss up to director

Cass and Maggie are finalists auditioning for the lead female role in a film written by James Franco. Scene opens with them waiting for James to get there. Maggie arrives right before Cass.

Cass

Is this...are you...his assistant?

Maggie

His assistant will probably be a bitchy gay. Or a model. *(beat)* Are you a finalist?

Cass

Yes! I'm Cass.

Maggie

(sizing her up) As in Cassandra, the character from Greek mythology who went crazy? Maggie. And you just got here from...

Cass

(Maggie goes to shake Cass' hand, but Cass hugs her) Louisville. I love your name -- Maggie in *Cat on a Hot Tin Roof* is my FAVORITE! And it's actually Cassiopeia, like the constellation. *(beat as she surveys room)* So what do you think Mr. Franco's looking for? I'm so nervous.

Maggie

I think Cassiopeia was also a vain queen who got tied to a chair, right? *(beat)* Apparently he wants a total unknown...which is weird, because I'm, like, pretty well known. In commercials.

Cass

That's where I've seen you before! In the puppy bowl ad for cat chow, right?

Maggie

It was kitty litter. That wasn't one of my lead roles, but yep, that was me in the cat suit.

Cass

I'm so excited to meet him. All my agent said is he wants a "strong female lead." I'm thinking like a Katniss? *(does a crossbow pose)*

Maggie

You know this is an indie film, right?

Cass

Oh gosh -- then do you think this monologue will work? *(hands her a script)* Read these few lines for me?

Maggie

(grudgingly) "We never found anything on Jack. There's no record of him at all."

Cass

(very dramatically) “No, there wouldn't be, would there? And I've never spoken of him until now. Not to anyone -- not even your grandfather. A woman's heart is a deep ocean of secrets -- ”

Jon enters (in shades) as she finishes and does a semi-facetious slow clap. Maggie looks pleased.

Jon

Okay ladies, let's get started, I'm short on time.

Cass

James Franco! It's such an honor...I'm such a fan of Geeks & Freaks --

Maggie

(cutting in front of Cass and introducing herself) Margaret Deveaux. You must be the director. Will James be joining us as well?

Jon

Jon VanDerHausen. James had an unexpected photo shoot with some models for his new poetry collection, so I'll be making the final decision today.

Cass

Oh! So...James isn't going to see my audition?

Maggie

As we all know, James is VERY avant-garde...almost like a maverick. He likes to do things his own way.

Jon

Oh, he'll be watching -- we'll be streaming live to his phone. *(gesturing toward audience)* Camera's right there. First there's a little quiz James just texted me that I need to give you orally. Number one. True or false: Miley Cyrus is a paragon of female empowerment.

Maggie

It's a clever question. False. Next.

Cass

I...I don't know. Is that the one who spanks teddy bears and sings on a hot dog “ ‘cause she don't care”? True?

Jon

Two. Actresses should never question going fully nude for the integrity of a film's artistic vision.

Cass

False!

Maggie

I would say it depends, but true if it's high quality art. You know, like James's.

Cass

I was only kidding! True.

Jon

Final question. How do you feel about pushing the envelope on race, gender, sexuality, class, and classiness? Oh -- time's up, James is ready to see you read his script.

Maggie

With all due respect to James's time, Cassiopeia was really hoping to do her Titanic monologue.

Jon

I already saw that, thanks. Here's the script.

Cass

(mouthing a "thanks" aside to Maggie) Mr. VanDerHausen, I bet Maggie has something she'd like to show you and James, too! Maybe this could be our warm-up? *(winking encouragingly at Maggie)*

Jon

Ok, James says he has an extra minute while he's having his eyebrows re-waxed. Go.

Maggie

(Squats down and starts yelling words of encouragement in Arabic into a cave opening. Then speaks in English into a walkie-talkie:)

No sir. No I am NOT coming back to the base. These women need me. Yes, we are emerging from the proverbial cave to open a girls' school, and none of you can stop us. I am tired of translating arguments about border disputes and prisoners and leaders. You have NO idea who the real leaders are, but, hint hint -- they don't have machine guns. In other words, penises.

Cass

(clapping with genuine enthusiasm; Jon is busy texting) What was that from? *(beat; in awe)* Did you write that?

Jon

Next.

Cass

Well, you already saw my Rose monologue, so here goes. *(Cass breaks into sultry song "Pull*

My Hair” directly into the camera for James, breaking into some sexy dancing even though she’s clearly uncomfortable doing it. Her song/dance eventually gets Jon’s attention and he starts filming her with his phone. Maggie intervenes, now feeling protective of Cass.)

Maggie

Wow, that was...quite a character you were doing just now!

Jon

That was great. Really really great. James was in the bathroom but I’ll send him the video. Here’s the script -- you’ll be Tricia, you’re playing Taryn. I’ll read Hookie. And just so you know, this is adapted from an award-winning short story he wrote in grad school.

(Is stage direction in JF’s script that they are stretching/practicing dance moves while reading these lines? Is that too much? Or they could be doing hair/makeup in the mirror. Also, each of them can do an accent of some sort. Maybe JF’s directions are offensive like “wigger”)

Cass

Um, I’m not certain I know what a “stoner accent” sounds like -- *(Jon gestures to them to get started)*

Maggie

“If you were Egyptian, what would you do?”

Cass

“Don’t start this shit again, Tricia. I would be a pharaoh’s mistress.”

Maggie

“You’re too fat, though. Pharaoh’s mistresses are skinny.”

Cass

“I don’t want to be an Egyptian anyway: pyramids and mummies and shit, and sand, fuck it, it’s all boring.”

Maggie

“Yeah. I wish I was Mexican, or Hebrew, I mean Jewish, I mean Israeli, or Mexican Jewish, or Mexican Jewish gay, because it can be so boring being me sometimes, you know?”

Jon

(delivering his line with gusto) “Get your heels on, bitches, it’s showtime!”

Cass

(going ashen) It says here we’re supposed to start stripping.

Maggie

I'm sorry, I guess I'm just not getting what this is about.

Jon

It's about, well, to quote James -- "exploring race, wearing other people's identities like spring break bikinis, female power -- feminist stuff like that" -- end quote. *(this is where Jon is starting to break)*

Cass

May I use the restroom for a minute?

Jon

I think our live stream just got interrupted, I need to go check on it. *(tries to leave)*

Maggie

No, stay right where you are, both of you. I just got it! This script is proof of what women want: they want men, especially men named JAMES FRANCO, to help them find their voices. 'I wish I was' -- and it's "were," by the way -- I wish I was Mexican Jewish gay?" I mean, that just makes me feel so powerful. How 'bout you, Cass?

Cass

I feel sort of like I'm tied to a chair right now.

Jon

(after a pause) James wants me to let you know that the role went to Jennifer Lawrence after all. He just tweeted it. *(pause; takes off shades)* Did you think this was a real audition? You know that inviting nobodies in as finalists is a standard ploy to pressure A-listers into taking the part, right? *(starting to lose it)* And do you think I believe in this crap he writes? I was an English major at Oberlin for chrissakes! *(head in hands)* I need a decaf latte. *(exits)*

In a tender gesture, Maggie pantomimes untying Cass from her chair. They stand up and take each other's hands.

Cass

Do you think he's still watching?

Maggie

I don't give a shit, but I hope so. Hey, let's do one last thing. Just follow my lead. *(they face the audience; Maggie pantomimes driving and begins in best Geena Davis voice)* "Look, everything we got to lose is already gone anyway."

Cass

(in best Susan Sarandon voice) "You're a good friend."

Maggie

"You, too, sweetie. The best. How do you like the vacation so far?"

Cass

"I guess I went a little crazy, huh?"

Maggie

"No, you've always been crazy. This is just the first chance you've ever had to really express yourself."

Cass

(breaking out of character) Oh my god, this is the part when they drive off the cliff!

Maggie

Yeah, except we're gonna drive to the top of Mulholland and throw this script off a cliff instead. Did you get that, James? Then to the cafe to start writing our own lines.

Cass

Hit it!

Blackout