

SUPERMODELS IN JEOPARDY

A One-Act Dark Comedy

by
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(ANDI, female, anywhere from late 20s on up, stands in a spotlight, perhaps in front of a podium. The flash of cameras. It's a press conference.)

ANDI: At 3:04 this afternoon—that's Pacific Daylight Time—the Charles Darwin Memorial Convention Center suffered a partial collapse. While we were able to evacuate the building within minutes, I regret to announce that a small group of supermodels, who as you know are here for the International Supermodel Expo . . . A small group of supermodels—not even a group—a handful . . . a small handful of supermodels were unable to evacuate and are currently . . . trapped. I hesitate to use the word trapped—detained, as in delayed, is more accurate. A small group of supermodels are detained inside their dressing room. Rest assured that we are making every effort to free them, and the supermodels want their fans around the world to know that they are in good spirits and still looking 75 to 80 times more attractive than you. I will be back with an update as soon as I have one. God bless.

(Lights up on a pack of REPORTERS jockeying for position. No one person should deliver two lines in a row. Productions not using an ENSEMBLE may use voices in the dark.)

REPORTERS: Which supermodels are still inside?

Could you give us their names?

Has anyone been injured?

How are their follicles?

Will the Expo go on?

Are their nails intact?

Do you have photos?

Have you secured an alternate location?

What about their teeth?

Do you believe that this is the work of terrorists?

ANDI: No questions right now, but I know that the supermodels appreciate—

REPORTER: Could you comment on reports that a group called People for More Realistic Eating Habits has claimed resp—

ANDI: No comment.

(Lights down on the REPORTERS, and the spotlight goes out, leaving ANDI in an office that has become a makeshift command center. BOB, a little older but outranked by ANDI and looking very tired, looks like HE's been watching the press conference. Sounds of exploratory pinging and tapping, as well as crowd noise, in the background.)

Why do people assume that every time something bad happens, there must be terrorists involved?

BOB: People for More Realistic Eating Habits were the ones who kidnapped models' lapdogs so that—

ANDI: It was a bad building—end of story. Of course, we didn't know that at the time we booked it and were assured it was completely safe, but . . . I felt fat out there.

BOB: You aren't fat.

ANDI: *(to herself, taking a deep breath)* We are all beautiful. I am beautiful. I am beautiful.

(ANDI takes another deep breath and smiles. Beat.)

BOB: Thank God we got most of them out.

ANDI: We didn't.

BOB: We didn't?

ANDI: That's right.

BOB: You're saying we didn't get most of them out?

ANDI: I'm saying we didn't get any of them out.

BOB: Any? But that's—

ANDI: Every supermodel in the world, except for the two guys from Iceland who missed their connection in Toronto. Have you seen Heather Lynn?

BOB: Who flies through Toronto? Why didn't they fly through New York?

ANDI: I don't know, Bob. But it's looking like a pretty good decision. Have you seen her?

BOB: I didn't realize it was my job to keep track of the interns.

ANDI: Is that a no?

BOB: Not since this morning. *(beat)* So at least the models are in good spirits then. *(beat)* You said they were in good spirits. *(beat)* They're not in good spirits?

(There is a banging at the door. EDEN sweeps into the room. SHE is fabulously overdressed: definitely an agent. If using an ENSEMBLE, a pair of PERSONAL ASSISTANTS trail her. ONE or BOTH take notes, or ONE might tote bottled water or even care for a stuffed lapdog.)

EDEN: This is a disaster.

ANDI: We prefer to think of it as . . .

BOB: A challenge?

EDEN: Where is *(with a flourish every time SHE says the word, particularly the final syllable)* LaLaLa? Why has she not been rescued by now?

ANDI: *(Beat. Lying)* Of course she has.

EDEN: Good. Take me to her.

ANDI: That's not possible right now.

EDEN: I am her agent. I demand to see her immediately.

ANDI: She's resting.

EDEN: I will watch over LaLaLa while she sleeps.

ANDI: She gave strict orders not to be disturbed.

EDEN: Not my LaLaLa! Now I demand that you tell me where she is, or I'll—

BOB: She fired you. *(beat)* My colleague just didn't know how to say it.

EDEN: No.

BOB: Yes.

EDEN: No!

ANDI: *(going along with it)* I'm so sorry.

EDEN: But . . . but—

ANDI: As soon as we got her out, she said she'd had an epiphany.

EDEN: *(breaking down)* But LaLaLa never has epiphanies. She's just beautiful.

ANDI: I know. But being in a building collapse is a life-changing event.

BOB: I believe those were her exact words.

EDEN: *(bawling)* She used the words "life-changing"?

BOB: No sooner had we gotten her out, then she did that thing . . .

ANDI: That hair flip thing she does.

(ANDI and BOB flip their hair in unison.)

And then she said, "I'm having an epiphany. Being in a building collapse is a life-changing event. I should make a life change. I'm firing my agent." *(ushering EDEN toward the door)* Now if you'll excuse us.

EDEN: But—

ANDI: If you love LaLaLa, you'll let her rest. Perhaps she's overtired and will reconsider.

BOB: I'd give it a week.

(THEY push EDEN out and close the door behind her.)

ANDI: Thank you.

BOB: So are you saying they're not in good spirits down in that dressing room?

ANDI: They may be in great spirits.

BOB: May?

ANDI: We can't make contact.

BOB: So that whole business about them wanting their fans to know . . .

ANDI: It seemed like something they'd say.

BOB: *(beat)* Wow.

ANDI: *(beat)* Wow? *(pause)* Bob?

BOB: I'm starting to feel positively joyous that I got passed over for that promotion.

ANDI: I had nothing to do with that.

BOB: If I had gotten the job that was rightfully mine, I'd be stuck holding the bag. Like you.

ANDI: You know it wasn't my fault you got—

BOB: Thank you for stealing my job!

(Enter WENDY the intern, a bright-eyed, bushy-tailed college student—maybe too bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, holding a cell phone.)

WENDY: I've got them! I had to call Barney Rub over at Granite Management, who gave me the cell number for Wilma Flint at Bedrack Entertainment, but that turns out to be her public number—which is just a recording telling people she loves us—when what I really needed was her private number, which I got after I begged her second assistant for seven minutes and promised to work the next two Saturdays in her office buffing headshots. And once I finally got Wilma on the phone, which only took four tries because I kept getting kicked to voicemail and I felt I should talk to her in person about this, she was totally helpful. Gave her my name, address, phone number, major credit card, last four digits of my social and my mother's maiden name and I was in I have She Who is Too Gorgeous To Be Named's cell number, and she's on the line!

(ANDI and BOB rush for the phone. BOB gets to it first.)

BOB: *(into the phone)* Hello?

(BOB listens. Beat. HE looks at the phone in puzzlement. ANDI snatches it from him.)

ANDI: Hello? *(listens)* Who is this? *(to WENDY and BOB)* This is some guy.

WENDY: No!

ANDI: *(into the phone)* Hold on. *(hands WENDY the phone.)*

WENDY: *(into the phone)* Hello? Who is this? *(listens)* This is Wendy. I'd like to speak with You Know Who. *(to ANDI and BOB)* I know this is the right number. *(into the phone)* You know Who. The whole reason I can say You Know Who is because everyone knows when I say You Know Who, who I'm talking about. *(to ANDI and BOB)* He says he doesn't know.

ANDI: *(to BOB)* Is that possible?

BOB: There was a man who had been kept in an underground cave by his mother for eleven years. His reaction to the mention of You Know Who was something along the lines of "that rings a bell." He stopped talking after that.

WENDY: *(into the phone)* Excuse me, but do you happen to be trapped in a dressing room of a collapsed convention center with a lot of astoundingly gorgeous people? *(listens)* Get with it, buster!

(WENDY hangs up just as there's a knocking at the door. ANDI, BOB and WENDY all look at each other, then ANDI and BOB turn to WENDY: SHE's the intern. WENDY gets the door. In walks the FIRE CAPTAIN, who could be male or female. While the others talk, WENDY busies herself with the cell phone, having a mimed conversation in the corner as SHE tries to redeem herself.)

ANDI: How soon will they be out?

FIRE CAPTAIN: It's hard to say.

ANDI: Why is it hard to say?

FIRE CAPTAIN: That's hard to say, too.

ANDI: We've donated to the fire company every year. Bob, tell him we donate.

BOB: We have in the past.

ANDI: We donate.

BOB: We have.

ANDI: We donated this year!

BOB: Actually, I was feeling ambivalent after my demotion.

ANDI: You weren't demoted.

BOB: I was feeling ambivalent.

ANDI: What are you saying?

BOB: Our donation may have reflected that ambivalence.

ANDI: *(smiling sweetly at the FIRE CAPTAIN)* Just one second. *(ANDI yanks BOB out of earshot of the FIRE CAPTAIN. To BOB)* Ambivalent?! How could you be ambivalent about—

BOB: You'd be amazed at how little effort it takes.

ANDI: I could have your job.

BOB: You already do.

ANDI: You're fired.

BOB: That's fine. Gives me more time to launch my new company.

(BOB starts packing his things into his briefcase.)

ANDI: *(to the FIRE CAPTAIN as SHE pulls a wad of bills from her wallet)* How much will it cost to take care of this?

FIRE CAPTAIN: Ma'am, we rescue everyone equally.

ANDI: How much will it cost to rescue some people more equally than others?

FIRE CAPTAIN: It has nothing to do with money. I just don't know how long it's going to take to get them out. It's not like we're talking about a doghouse falling on top of them.

ANDI: You can't just stand around and do nothing.

FIRE CAPTAIN: We're not. But we can't charge in there with a backhoe.

BOB: *(to ANDI)* Do you have the traditional post-employment personal effects box?

ANDI: *(ignoring BOB)* Why not?

FIRE CAPTAIN: If we go in there and move the wrong things around, it could collapse completely.

ANDI: When do you think you'll be able to move the right things?

BOB: *(comes up with a bag)* Never mind. This'll do.

WENDY: *(on the phone)* Okay.

FIRE CAPTAIN: Those are supermodels in there. I am not gambling with their lives.

ANDI: Don't you think I know that? The people in there, they're like my children. Do you think I would gamble with my children's lives?

BOB: You don't have children.

ANDI: I said they were *like* my children. As in "as if" I had children.

WENDY: *(on the phone)* Okay.

FIRE CAPTAIN: Ma'am, the second there's anything to report, I'll be on you like white on rice. Don't you

worry your not-quite-supermodel, pretty little face. *(beat)* I should get back to it. There's a mean game of Texas hold 'em going on while we wait for the engineers to think things through. *(exits)*

BOB: *(to WENDY)* Two words: Lounge Lizard—wrapping your reptile in love.

WENDY: *(into the phone)* I'll do it.

BOB: Imagine a Gila monster. Deliberate, lethal, the ever-watchful, rear-fanged assassin of the desert. Now imagine him, your perfect pet, wearing one of these babies.

(HE shows her a sketchbook, or better yet, a lizard-sized lounge outfit. As HE does so, lights up on various MEMBERS of the ENSEMBLE if you're using one. If not, all of their lines should be performed by BOB as a monologue.)

What does that say about you? It says—

FIRST ENSEMBLE MEMBER: I am an adventurer.

BOB: It says—

SECOND ENSEMBLE MEMBER: I am fearless.

BOB: It says—

THIRD ENSEMBLE MEMBER: I have an impeccable fashion sense and more disposable income than I know what to do with.

BOB: It says—

VARIOUS ENSEMBLE MEMBERS: I am more exotic than you.

I am braver than you.

I am richer than you.

I own you.

BOB: How can anyone not want it?

(Lights down on the ENSEMBLE MEMBERS, who exit. WENDY holds out her cell phone to ANDI.)

WENDY: Okay—I had to promise I'd work catering at three parties, walk two dogs every other Sunday for four months, and do carpool for the second cousin of Oh My's housekeeper. . .

ANDI: You have Oh My?

WENDY: Ooh La La!

BOB: Wendy, how would you like to work for me at Lounge Lizard Enterprises?

ANDI: Ooh La La the expression or the model?

WENDY: The mo—

BOB: Forget the phone, Wendy.

ANDI: Give me the phone.

BOB: People are going to respond to this in unprecedented fashion, and when they do, I'll need someone I can trust at my side. . .

(HEIDI JECKEL, a reporter, slips inside.)

HEIDI: Heidi Jeckel from the News U Can't Lose.

ANDI: *(into the phone)* Hello!

BOB: Someone that I won't throw out after ten years of service when some junior nobody comes along and looks marginally prettier.

ANDI: *(into the phone)* Can you hear me?

WENDY: Bob, I. . .

ANDI: Wendy!

HEIDI: Would you care to comment on the—

ANDI: No comment.

HEIDI: Is that—

ANDI: Wendy, get her—

HEIDI: Is there any truth—

ANDI: *(into phone)* How are you doing—

BOB: Wendy, here's your chance to be ahead of the curve.

HEIDI: Can anyone comment on—

ANDI: *(to HEIDI)* No.

BOB: I can comment.

ANDI: *(to BOB)* No, you can't.

BOB: I don't work here anymore. *(to HEIDI)* Hello, my name is Bob Katt, founder and chief executive officer of Lounge Lizard Enterprises—

ANDI: Wendy!

BOB: Wrapping your reptile in love.

ANDI: *(into phone)* Of course, I know that being trapped in a dressing room in a collapsed building means you're not doing well.

BOB: And this is Wendy, Lounge Lizard's executive vice-president.

WENDY: I am?

HEIDI: Bob, care to comment on the rumor that—

BOB: Heidi, I would love—

ANDI: Bob, may I have a moment? *(into the phone)* Hold on.

BOB: I don't know. I am really feeling the need to comment.

HEIDI: Come on over and comment, Bob.

ANDI: *(into the phone)* Close your eyes. Count to 10. You won't even notice I'm gone.

WENDY: What's my salary?

BOB: Inflated.

ANDI: *(into the phone)* A slower 10. Bob!

(BOB makes a big show of reluctance as HE huddles with ANDI.)

Okay—what do you want?

HEIDI: Better yet—I'll come to you.

BOB: The corner office—

ANDI: But that's my—

BOB: The corner office, a 50-50 share of all decisions—this little career-killer is all yours, of course—

(HEIDI and WENDY both try to listen in on ANDI and BOB. The TWO constantly get in each other's way, thus preventing either from eavesdropping.)

ANDI: Are you insane?

BOB: I believe it's called being in a better bargaining position.

ANDI: Wendy, get her out of—

BOB: Wendy, stand your ground!

ANDI: *(listening to the phone before talking into it)* An even slower 10. *(listens)* Of course we're trying to get you out. It's all we're thinking about.

HEIDI: Who is on the other end of the phone?

ANDI: I'm asking you to hold because of the intense work I'm doing on your behalf.

BOB: Keep up the intense work. *(HE slides toward HEIDI.)*

ANDI: Go ahead. Tell her everything. It's not going to change a thing.

BOB: Fine.

ANDI: It's not going to change a thing, because I'm going to rescue—Bob! *(ANDI dives for BOB's legs, holding onto him.)* Fine—but I need a non-disclosure agreement.

BOB: Fine.

ANDI: Fine.

BOB: Wendy, you're the intern. Get her out of here.

ANDI: *(into the phone)* Don't you worry. They've got the engineers, the fire department, the police and—

WENDY: I thought I was executive vice-president.

BOB: And you very well might be again.

WENDY: I'm confused.

BOB: *(to himself)* If you want something done right . . . *(advances on HEIDI menacingly)*

ANDI: Yes, I did call the president.

HEIDI: Remember that little thing called freedom of the press?

(Lights up on the PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES, played by a MEMBER of the ENSEMBLE.)

PRESIDENT OF THE UNITED STATES: My fellow Americans, it is my hope—no, my *profound* hope—and indeed my dream that we will dwell in a land of supermodels for all the rest of our days.

(Lights down on the PRESIDENT.)

HEIDI: I can take you.

ANDI: I'm going to give you to Wendy now. She'll get you everything you need.

(BOB tries to push HEIDI out the door, but SHE's too strong.)

(Into the phone) I'm not abandoning you. But there's someone here who is against everything supermodels stand for, and I can't stand idly by. Kiss kiss. Here's Wendy. *(thrusts the phone at WENDY)*

WENDY: Hello?

(ANDI joins BOB, and together THEY push HEIDI out the door. Just as THEY walk away, HEIDI pushes back inside. THEY push the door closed on her again.)

HEIDI: You haven't heard the last of me!

(And HEIDI is finally gone, with BOB and ANDI leaning against the door to keep her out.)

BOB: Curious thing—whenever someone says that I haven't heard the last of them, 9 times out of 10 they'll accidentally get flattened by a bus within 2 minutes.

(There's the sound of screeching brakes and a horrible crash.)

ANDI: That's uncanny.

BOB: I am simply the instrument.

(WENDY, on the phone, takes notes.)

WENDY: Uh huh. *(listens)* Uh huh. *(listens)* Of course. You hang in there. And I just have to add that it is such an honor attending to your needs. I won't let you down. *(SHE hangs up.)*

ANDI: You hung up on Ooh La La?

WENDY: Her cell phone is almost dead.

ANDI: Surely there must be a hundred cell phones down there. I know, for a fact, that LaLaLa and She Who is Too Gorgeous have three each.

WENDY: No one has reception.

BOB: Not one?

WENDY: Except for Ooh La La.

BOB: That's. . .

WENDY: Weird.

ANDI: No.

BOB: More than weird.

ANDI: Like they've been struck down. . .

BOB: By a higher power.

WENDY: But why?

ANDI: Heather Lynn would know. She's very spiritual. Still no word from her?

(BOB and WENDY shake their heads.)

WENDY: I'm so on it.

(WENDY exits just as the FIRE CAPTAIN enters.)

ANDI: Thank God—you're starting?

FIRE CAPTAIN: Unfortunately, no. The engineers say the building's a mess.

(Lights up on a group of ENGINEERS, cards in their hands, as if THEY are in the middle of a poker game.)

FIRST ENGINEER: The building's a mess.

BOB: A mess meaning...

SECOND ENGINEER: We touch it...

(The ENGINEERS make the sounds of a building coming crashing down—for a little too long and with a little too much enthusiasm. Lights down on the ENGINEERS.)

ANDI: So how are we—

FIRE CAPTAIN: Basically, the fact that they're alive at all is a miracle. Somehow, when the building fell in, it created an air pocket, this little bubble of unimploded bliss, right around the dressing room.

BOB: A higher power.

FIRE CAPTAIN: If they'd been anywhere else, they'd have been flattened like pancakes and then had the air sucked right out of their lungs.

ANDI: So, what are you saying?

FIRE CAPTAIN: I'm saying, basically, the fact that they're alive at all is a miracle. Somehow, when the building fell in, it created an air pocket, this little bubble of unimploded bliss, right around the dressing room. If they'd been anywhere else, they'd have been flattened like pancakes and then had the air sucked right out of their lungs.

ANDI: I know that. But what are you saying about the rescue?

FIRE CAPTAIN: I'm saying we can't. Rescuing them would kill them.

BOB: You mean attempting to rescue them. If we rescued them. . .

FIRE CAPTAIN: Of course.

ANDI: Surely there must be a way.

FIRE CAPTAIN: We won't stop trying. Those are supermodels in there. They deserve our best efforts.

ANDI: How much time?

FIRE CAPTAIN: That's hard to say.

ANDI: Stop saying it's hard to say. *(beat)* Is there something wrong?

FIRE CAPTAIN: I think we all agree a building collapse is—

ANDI: With me. Is there something wrong with me? You've been staring at—no, you haven't. *(breathing deeply)* We are all beautiful. I am beautiful. I am beautiful. Continue.

(Lights up on the ENGINEERS, who may still be playing cards. Feel free to assign their lines to whichever ENGINEER best suits your needs, and for productions not using an ENSEMBLE, the FIRE CAPTAIN should deliver their lines.)

FIRST ENGINEER: On the surface, it may seem simple enough: take the estimated available air, which is based on the volume of the uncollapsed dressing area, divide that by a supermodel's average hourly oxygen intake and then multiply by the number of supermodels.

ANDI: So there we go.

SECOND ENGINEER: But . . . there's a small opening that is allowing air to get in.

ANDI: If they're getting air, then what's the problem?

BOB: The opening is good, right?

THIRD ENGINEER: So it would seem. But the supermodels are consuming air much faster than it's going in.

ANDI: But if there's an opening, can't you simply pump air in?

THIRD ENGINEER: That's what we thought. But the second we turned it up, it caused the structure to buckle.

ANDI: So if they get enough air to breathe—

FIRST ENGINEER: They'll be crushed.

(Lights down on the ENGINEERS.)

ANDI: *(beat)* We can't just sit here while they die. *(beat)* What do I tell them?

BOB: You've been very good at lying so far. Tell them we'll have them out by morning.

ANDI: But what if they have any last words? How can we deprive the fans of the guidance that only their supermodels can give? How can we allow an entire generation to grow up. . . parentless?

(Lights up on a group of FANS holding vigil outside the convention center. No FAN should say two lines in a row. If your production has no ENSEMBLE, simply cut the FAN lines.)

VARIOUS FANS: I feel like I'm starting to drift.

Me too.

My moral compass—

It's spinning out of control.

I'm spinning out of control—

Without my supermodel to guide me, I'm . . .

She was like my guardian angel.

Why hast thou forsaken me?

BOB: Tell 'em they're dying, and you're going to have a riot down there. They'll collapse the building without any help from us.

FIRE CAPTAIN: In my limited experience with supermodels, I'm inclined to agree with the gentleman.

END OF FREE PREVIEW