

STAGE STRUCK, SAMPLE SCENE

TRACY BRIGDEN

Simon, Charlie and Miranda tumble into Simon's fourth floor walk-up in the East Village. It's small, arty, and a mess. They have been drinking, a lot. Simon and Miranda are singing "Moondance" by Van Morrison way too loud for the hour. The neighbor downstairs bangs on the ceiling. Charlie tries to shush them, putting his hand over Miranda's mouth. She turns around and kisses him and then dissolves into laughter.

SIMON

Get a room! Oh, look! Here's a room! Under all the crap. Hold on - let me just-

Simon dumps his coat and begins clearing away junk.

CHARLIE

Simon, your neighbors must - Jesus. Oh my god - It's nearly - I HAVE to go home! I cannot-

SIMON

Just dump your stuff - here or - and make yourself- I'll just -

CHARLIE

Miranda, we cannot stay very long -

MIRANDA

Charlie, chill.

CHARLIE

I have to get up at-

MIRANDA

Bathroom?

Simon points at a door. Miranda exits.

CHARLIE

We're all the way - and I have to be at - and we have tech in four...now, THREE days, oh my god. Miranda's got to get home and look at her lines.

SIMON

She is word perfect, Charlie. But if you have to go, just go already for fucks sake.

CHARLIE

I'm going to as soon as I can- Wow, this place is really charming, Simon - I mean your masculine boho chic decor is not really my -

SIMON

Thanks..luck, really. And standing in line to get the Voice on Tuesday nights and running to the payphone with a fistful of quarters. The guy who rented me this place got over 200 calls about it from one ad. He only called the first 4. I slipped him an extra grand and -

CHARLIE

Oh yeah, I have a friend on 80th and Columbus who-

SIMON

It's the only way - where are you again?

CHARLIE

Kew Gardens, but it's actually really only a half an hour - well I mean when the Q train is -

SIMON

Yeah, sure-

CHARLIE

I have tons of space and there this really good Greek restaurant-

SIMON

Cool, cool. So Charlie - what about that scene in Act II - are you going to take another pass or -

CHARLIE

Yeah, man. That's another reason I gotta get home and get some fucking sleep -

SIMON

I just think if we cut Van Helsing a bit, a beef up the Count's speech a little, it will really have the impact you intend - you know visceral - wrenching - it's there, if we just trim the hedges we'll see the trees - you know?

CHARLIE

Well, I-

Miranda comes out of the bathroom.

She is still wearing her coat and hat.

MIRANDA

I like your shower curtain.

SIMON

Sweetheart, give me your coat.

MIRANDA

I'm cold.

CHARLIE

Are you getting sick? You have to - the show is-

Simon comes to Miranda and peels off her coat, throwing it aside. He wraps himself around her and rubs up and down on her arms and shoulders vigorously to warm her up.

SIMON

You need a whiskey.

CHARLIE

No Simon. We've got to go -

SIMON

Come and get it kiddies.

CHARLIE

Fuck, okay one-

Charlie walks over to get the whiskey. He and Simon drink. Miranda stays shivering in the middle of the room.

MIRANDA

What if I suck?

CHARLIE

You don't.

MIRANDA

What if I forget all my lines and they throw eggs at the stage?

CHARLIE

You'll all slip and fall down.

MIRANDA

"Charlie McDonnell's otherwise exceptional play was marred by the plodding and insipid performance of the wildly unexceptional and exceptionally unattractive Miranda Billington in her New York debut."

CHARLIE

"Miranda Billington's dazzling performance and stunning presence saved what would otherwise have been two hours of pretentious drudgery and lumpy dialogue."

SIMON

Hey! What about me?

Simon brings Miranda a whiskey and pours more for himself and Charlie.

MIRANDA

"Simon Fielding's razor sharp direction was dulled by Miranda Billington's relentlessly shrieky performance. The only redeeming moments of the play were those when she lay in a dead faint in the Count's arms and the audience was spared her scenery chewing and grotesque facial contortions."

SIMON

How about: "Simon Fielding was *sturdy* in the role of the Count."

MIRANDA

No, no: "The role of the Count was *ably* played by--"

SIMON

Ably!

CHARLIE

Stop it you guys, you're freaking me out. It'll be a triumph.(beat) Right?

The question hangs in the air while they think about bad reviews.

MIRANDA

I wish you had some chocolate cake. Do you have any baked goods? A cookie? A tiramisu?

SIMON

No. The play will be a triumph. It has to be. Now drink up. Director's orders. To the play!

MIRANDA AND CHARLIE

(Half-heartedly) The play!

They all drink.

MIRANDA

Whoa. I feel a little wonky.

CHARLIE

Oh shit. Are you going to puke?

SIMON

Come on lovie, sit down right over here. You're okay.

He takes her glass away and guides her to the couch.

SIMON

Here's a blanket - close your eyes for a minute.

MIRANDA

Charlie, come and lie down here with me.

CHARLIE

Miranda, I have to work in the morning and I'm fried. And you have a show, MY show, to perform in seven, no SIX days. Fuck. I have to get home. I can't function on cheap whiskey and three hours sleep a night.

MIRANDA

Blah,blah, blah-

SIMON

Now, Miranda - if Charlie needs to go-

CHARLIE

I have to go to System Tech in the morning -

Miranda makes a Bronx cheer.

MIRANDA

Party pooper! Don't go to that stupid job.

CHARLIE

Sorry babe, but some of us have to pay our own rent.

MIRANDA

Yeah we do, and?

CHARLIE

Well, you don't, so you can-

MIRANDA

What do you mean I don't-

CHARLIE

It's obvious that the three mornings a week you stand around in that stationary store don't cover your rent, let alone all your other expenses.

SIMON

Now children, don't make me pull the car over.

MIRANDA

You have no idea what I make at the store or-

CHARLIE

Your mom and dad help you out. That's great. Good for you.

MIRANDA

My parents do not-

CHARLIE

Okay - or what, Grandma left you a trust fund so you could "follow your dreams" -

SIMON

Hey Charlie, maybe you should go before you really-

MIRANDA

No it's okay...Charlie is pissed, I get it, understandably. He has to work his ass off at a shitty job doing data entry and despite the aforementioned job, he still has to live in an outer Siberian borough that does not take a half an hour to get to - it takes an hour and a half to get to.

CHARLIE

It takes 45 minutes, tops.

MIRANDA

If you say so.

CHARLIE

The reason I want to go home to my shitty ass apartment instead of sitting around getting inebriated again with you two is that the fucking NY TIMES is coming to review our play in about two weeks and - newsflash ! a NY Times review can change your life! But no fucking pressure on the playwright who is the one who will be raked over the coals if this thing tanks. But clearly, I am the only one who cares about that.

MIRANDA

Yeah, right, Charlie, no one cares but you. Certainly not

the actors who are killing themselves to get it right but are attacked if they miss a single WORD or COMMA or if they happen to have a tiny pot of rapidly disappearing money that they have worked their ASSES OFF for YEARS to save up that helps them focus on the very task of getting the fucking crucial lines exactly right in their insanely whiney boyfriend's very important life-changing fucking play.

Beat while this hangs in the air.

SIMON

(laughing) Daaaamn, Miranda.

CHARLIE

You know what Miranda- You know what - I don't need to - I have - just - FUCK YOU.

SIMON

Now THAT is uncalled for!

CHARLIE

And fuck you too Simon. Clearly, I was mistaken. I thought I was working with professionals who took their craft seriously. Obviously I was wrong.

He gathers his coat and bag.

CHARLIE

Make sure she gets home all right. We don't have time to replace her.

MIRANDA

Whoa.

SIMON

You know, we all have a lot riding on this-

Charlies leaves, slamming the door behind him. The downstairs neighbor bangs on the ceiling.

MIRANDA

Fuuuuck me. Wow.

SIMON

That last thing, about replacing you - that was out of line.

MIRANDA

Ya think? But...actually...I am kind of a nightmare when I

drink too much aren't I?

SIMON

I think you're delightful.

MIRANDA

Uck. He's such a good guy, isn't he?

SIMON

Yes. Yes, he is. And talented.

MIRANDA

I know. But he's also kind of a fucking jerk sometimes.

SIMON

I know. Most talented people are. He just doesn't appreciate how hard you've been working.

MIRANDA

Yeah.

SIMON

And how talented you are.

MIRANDA

Thanks. I mean I waitressed, and nannied and pizza delivered and receptionisted in fucking CLEVELAND for a lifetime to save this money so I can do this.

He puts his arm around her.

MIRANDA

Wow. Talk about buzz kill. It's our one night off for weeks. Why not have fun?

SIMON

I have something to keep the party going.

MIRANDA

Cake?

SIMON

No...but I think you'll like it as much as cake...

MIRANDA

Oh goodie, is it Champagne?

SIMON

Nope.

MIRANDA

Pot?!

SIMON

Nah, that'll put you right to sleep.

MIRANDA

I *am* really tired.

Simon gets up and goes to a drawer  
and takes out a nice box with a  
hinged lid.

SIMON

Just you wait, Henry Higgins...

MIRANDA

You're the Henry Higgins in this scenario, could you be  
more brutal about my dialect?

SIMON

You'll thank me later. By the way, why did you pinch me in  
scene 8 today?

MIRANDA

You were going so slowly! It's got to be urgent -  
desperate. You're the director, so you can't always see  
yourself in it. I can help, you know. I have been told by  
a brilliant theatre professional that I have very good  
instincts.

He has put on "Moondance", returns  
to the couch and opens the box.

You do. Et voila! The very best - make-me-dance-til-dawn-  
crystallized sunshine and picker upper available for  
purchase in the borough of New York.

He takes out a bag of coke.

SIMON

Ever done it?

MIRANDA

Is it coke? Wow.

SIMON

You are just the most charming, innocent-

He leans in to kiss her. At first  
she draws away.

MIRANDA

I can't, I mean, what about Charlie?

SIMON

Charlie swore at you and left.

MIRANDA

Oh yeah.

Simon kisses her. This time she  
let's him.

MIRANDA

But what about our working, professional relationship?

SIMON

What about it?

Simon kisses her again, she  
engages. He breaks from her and  
readies the cocaine.

SIMON

Now, I do like so. And then do like so.

MIRANDA

How do you afford this?

SIMON

I have a friend - we have an arrangement. And here you are.

MIRANDA

I don't know, Simon.

SIMON

Trust me. You will enjoy it.

He touches her face, runs his hand  
down her neck and onto her body and  
puts the straw/rolled up bill in  
her hand.

MIRANDA

Do I just- I mean I've seen it on movies and stuff.

SIMON

That's it.

MIRANDA

Okay, here goes nothing.

She snorts a line. Reacts.

SIMON

Now the other.

MIRANDA

Really?

SIMON

Yes, darling, balance in everything.

She snorts the other in the other nostril.

SIMON

And now like so.

He wipes up some crumbs with his finger and puts it on his teeth. She follows suit and licks her teeth as he begins to prepare coke for himself.

MIRANDA

Well, that feels weird on my gums. So far I don't feel anything else, is that- I mean should I be-

SIMON

Just wait.

Simon deftly snorts his lines.

SIMON

Come here.

He begins kissing her neck.  
"Moondance" plays.

Lights Fade.