

# The Audition

John Bandler

Two young actresses participate in an unsettling audition.



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Published by Bandler Corporation [www.bandler.com](http://www.bandler.com)

## The Audition

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A one-act play

By John Bandler

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## THE AUDITION

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## PLOT SUMMARY

Two young actresses participate in an unsettling audition.

## CHARACTERS

CHARLOTTE, a young woman

VICTORIA, a young woman

## SETTING

A coffee shop

## SCENE: A COFFEE SHOP

CHARLOTTE and VICTORIA face each other at a table, each with coffee CUP and DEVICE (SCRIPT, PHONE or LAPTOP) at hand. They occasionally glance at their DEVICE and scroll through the text. VICTORIA acts assertive while CHARLOTTE seems eager to please.

CHARLOTTE

(peers intently at her DEVICE)

I think we're being pitted against each other.

VICTORIA

Yep. That's what it's all about.

CHARLOTTE

(hopeful)

But they might want both of us.

VICTORIA

Don't be naive. One of us is going to be a loser. And it won't be me.

CHARLOTTE

They never asked for any monologues.

(peers at her DEVICE))

Do you think this script, right now, is really part of the actual screenplay?

VICTORIA

Either that or this is one heck of a leg-pull. Auditions sort out the winners from the losers. And the losers are never happy. It's all about who survives.

CHARLOTTE

Creepy!

(points at her DEVICE)

All this stuff is practically what I would have said, would be saying, if we'd just sat down and improvised.

CHARLOTTE takes a sip from her CUP, looks around, then points at the AUDIENCE.

CHARLOTTE

You think he's looking at us?

VICTORIA

He better be!

CHARLOTTE

(glances at her DEVICE)

If this is part of the actual screenplay, then the film probably calls for an audition like this one. Right? For a film within the film? And our characters never met before. Or have we? I do hope they aren't really called Charlotte and Victoria!

VICTORIA

At this point nothing would surprise me.

CHARLOTTE

It must be a spoof. A comedy. It's so easy to change character names in one shot in a script. "Find" and "Replace." So, why not, eh? An audition set up with a script featuring two females auditioning for parts --

VICTORIA

-- or one part --

CHARLOTTE

-- in a film called, what, I wonder? We never really found out for sure.

(peers at her DEVICE)

Working title: "The Audition."

VICTORIA

Yep. That's what we're doing. An audition.

CHARLOTTE

Or maybe we're just, like, having a coffee break? Two actors discussing why they've been given audition dialogue they might just as well have engaged in if they'd been asked to improvise over coffee. It's uncanny.

VICTORIA

Why does it trouble you?

CHARLOTTE

It's so not done. It feels like one of those weird Russian doll things.

VICTORIA

What? The director using part of the screenplay as part of your audition? To see how you find your character's voice; to see if there's any chemistry between you and your opposite number? I'd just relax and go with the flow.

CHARLOTTE

(with concern)

"Find" and "Replace." Do you think they're expecting us to break out of this script, or something? The author will throw a fit if we toss out the script and just keep on talking..

VICTORIA

OK. Let's imagine we keep talking. What would we talk about, Charlotte?

CHARLOTTE

What we do when we're not acting?

VICTORIA

So, what do you do in your "real" world, Charlotte? Bake? Arrange flowers? Take your dog for a walk?

CHARLOTTE

(laughs)

Something like that.

VICTORIA

No duck-hunting, sky-diving, or rock-climbing without ropes, huh?

CHARLOTTE

Oh God no. I'd be terrified!

VICTORIA

Like you are of this audition.

CHARLOTTE

Look, I need this job, I'd love this job, right now.

VICTORIA

You're too eager, Charlotte. They're more likely to go for you if you act like you don't really want this job.

CHARLOTTE

Why would I do that?

VICTORIA

Because this is just a filler acting job for you. Between baking and flower arranging.

CHARLOTTE

Oh no! Do you really feel like that?

VICTORIA

(points at her DEVICE)

Look. Let's agree on something. This here script stinks. It's too long, getting nowhere fast, and I'm kinda losing patience with this damned audition.

(looks around)

What the hell else could they be looking for?

CHARLOTTE

You do sound angry.

VICTORIA

Do I? Do I really? You figured that out, huh?

CHARLOTTE

This sort of feels like a crazy IQ test. Are we doing this audition or talking about it, or just talking about doing it? An audition for an audition in a movie called "The Audition."

(pause)

I wonder how the story ends.

VICTORIA

I'll tell you, Charlotte... I murder you.

CHARLOTTE

Do I really make you that angry?

VICTORIA

You know, I'm not sure you're playing this the way the director wants it. Or, at any rate the way I would want it if I were the director. Doesn't anything fire you up?

CHARLOTTE

I don't like people who yell.

VICTORIA

(loud)

I'm not yelling, Charlotte!

CHARLOTTE

(slaps hand to her lips)

Oops.

VICTORIA

(looks at her DEVICE)

We better be coming to the end of this insane go-nowhere script. What happens next better be, if you get picked and I'm out of the running, I get to kill you.

CHARLOTTE

Wow!

VICTORIA

(angry)

If we both end up getting these parts -- although why they would choose you and not me -- I'll take bets that I get to kill you later on in the film. Your character, if one could call you that, is so damn annoying.

CHARLOTTE

Oh dear. I wish I knew why. Maybe we can, like, persuade the author to, like --

VICTORIA

Are you kidding me? I didn't hear that. I make scripts work, Charlotte. A professional makes their script work. If your character is supposed to whimper, then whimper, Charlotte. Whimper. You do it so convincingly.

CHARLOTTE

(smiles)

Thank you.

VICTORIA

If a character is supposed to take violent action, let them take violent action. Although, why any writer would imagine an audience wanting to watch a character who whimpers like you rather than someone who takes action I don't know.

CHARLOTTE

Maybe it's Charlotte's backstory? Her backstory?



VICTORIA

Backstory, smack-story!

CHARLOTTE

Maybe good, interesting characters like us are, like... More complex than meets the eye?

VICTORIA

I don't buy "complex." This Victoria character better not be into that multi-dimensional empathy crap. A straight-shooter is a straight-shooter. One honorable dimension. That's all. Straight as an arrow. Truth is simple. Life is straight.

CHARLOTTE

But I find you complex.

VICTORIA

Are you kidding?

CHARLOTTE

Really.

VICTORIA

Me? Complex? That's projection. Projection. Do me a favor: please don't project "complex" on Victoria. That's not who I am.

CHARLOTTE

Oh, but you are, Victoria. You really are. You're just trying to hide it. You're deep, and afraid of it.

VICTORIA

There's nothing deep about me.

(taps her DEVICE)

Not in this godforsaken script, there isn't.

CHARLOTTE

We're just playing the cards we're being dealt. Imagine --

VICTORIA

(exasperated)

-- For God's sake, Charlotte, all I'm saying is you just need to beef up your character a bit. All I'm saying is, give your character, "character."

CHARLOTTE

Are we strangers, Victoria? Two people who think they are getting to know each other while doing, or talking about, or whatever, an audition for an audition as Charlotte and Victoria in a film called “The Audition”?

(pause)

Or are we, or were we, friends?

Long SILENCE.

VICTORIA

Sorry I blew my stack... I’m just...

(taps her DEVICE)

I’m so plain unlikable here I want to scream!

(pause)

Still, I do hope I get to kill you later on...

CHARLOTTE

(laughs anxiously)

It’s all in the script. You get to do what you get to do, Victoria. But I’m sort of losing track of what’s real. This so-called audition or whatever we’re doing right now, is it real, really happening, right here and now, or are we already, already acting in this crazy, confusing, movie? Like, are we in the deep end of our story, already, like, totally?

ENDING #1

CHARLOTTE turns to their AUDIENCE.

CHARLOTTE

(frowns)

Again? From the top? Oh wow!

(glances apologetically at VICTORIA)

OK. Here we go again...

END #1

ENDING #2

VICTORIA turns to their AUDIENCE.

VICTORIA  
(to their AUDIENCE)

If we're forced to do this crap again, by God, I'm gonna kill her.

END #2

ENDING #3

VICTORIA turns to their AUDIENCE.

VICTORIA  
(to their AUDIENCE)

One of us has gotta die. And it better not be me.

END #3

ENDING #4

CHARLOTTE and VICTORIA turn to their  
AUDIENCE.

CHARLOTTE  
(anxious)

Again?

VICTORIA

Hold it! If we're forced to do this crap again, by God, one of us will die.

CHARLOTTE  
(frowns)

From the top?

VICTORIA

And it won't be me.

CHARLOTTE  
(glances apologetically at VICTORIA)

Oh wow! Here we go again...

END #4

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS: Beth Bandler, Stephanie Christiaens, Ruth Flynn, Rachelle Ho, Tom Mackan, Jaclyn Scobie, Megan Vierhout.

December 13, 2020