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# THE SEVEN MEN OF HANUKKAH

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## CHARACTERS

STEPHANIE, late 30s, F.

good-looking, wears glasses,  
quirky

PHIL, 30s, M.

an actor, hasn't been on an  
audition in a long time

Time:

The present

Setting:

A rented audition room

Notes:

*The Seven Men of Hanukkah* was written as part of The CRY HAVOC Company Holiday Play Series, 2013. It had a reading in Dec. 2013.

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*STEPHANIE, wearing a suit and heels, sits behind a desk. There is a banner behind her that reads: "Welcome to the Audition!"*

*There is a knock at the door. Stephanie adjusts her glasses, takes a deep breath and writes on a pad of paper.*

**STEPHANIE** Do come in.

*A man who used to be good looking but is looking a little haggard, PHIL, 30s, enters. Stephanie finishes writing. Stands. Smiles. Phil smiles. They stand and smile.*

**STEPHANIE** *(cont'd.)* I'm so glad you could make the audition.

**PHIL** I am too. Well---

**STEPHANIE** Well—

**PHIL** I brought a headshot.

*He hands it to her.*

**STEPHANIE** *(reading)* Nice, nice. I see here that you went to school.

**PHIL** Um, yes, yes I did.

**STEPHANIE** *(reading)* Special skills: juggling, driving—are you a good driver?

**PHIL** Excellent.

**STEPHANIE** Excellent. You have to be careful out there.

**PHIL** True.

**STEPHANIE** It's terrible to text and drive.

**PHIL** So I've heard.

**STEPHANIE** You don't ever do it? Even when you're at a stoplight?

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**PHIL** I live in New York. I don't drive very--

**STEPHANIE** But you're "excellent" at it.

**PHIL** Yes.

**STEPHANIE** Uh huh. And stage combat—that must help you develop your biceps, right?

**PHIL** Uh, sure.

*She takes off her glasses.*

**STEPHANIE** So, why don't you tell me a bit about your *acting*.

**PHIL** I'm classically trained—

**STEPHANIE** Yes, excellent, that will come in handy for sure. I love actors who are trained in the classics.

**PHIL** Really?

**STEPHANIE** Yes, obviously.

**PHIL** Do you have a favorite classically trained actor?

**STEPHANIE** Uh, yeah, of course. Like hundreds. But who are your--favorite actors. Actresses. Women. Who are--trained. In the classics. Go.

*Stephanie lifts up her pen to take notes. She adjusts her glasses.*

**PHIL** Oh, um—Maggie Smith—

*She writes something.*

**STEPHANIE** Uh huh, uh huh. Good. And--

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**PHIL** Cate Blanchett.

**STEPHANIE** Please.

**PHIL** Please what?

**STEPHANIE** Please--tell me *more*.

**PHIL** Judi Dench, Helen Mirren--

**STEPHANIE** How do you feel about Julia Roberts?

**PHIL** She's--fine.

**STEPHANIE** Good, good, glad to hear it. Okay. Now. How about a little acting exercise just to warm up the tool—the body. What do you say? A classic one?

**PHIL** Um—alright.

**STEPHANIE** The one where we repeat each other. Okay. I'll start and you repeat but I'm sure you know how it goes.

*She prepares herself to act.*

**STEPHANIE** Bbbrrrrrrhhhhhhahhahhhahhh... Do you *like* to cook?

**PHIL** Do I *like* to cook?

**STEPHANIE** Do *you* like to *cook*?

**PHIL** Do I like to *cook*?

**STEPHANIE** Do *you* like to *cook and clean*?

**PHIL** Do I--like to *cook and clean*?

**STEPHANIE** Do you like to cook or clean or least do the dishes if a woman cooks for you?

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**PHIL** Do you, do I—do um--like to—

**STEPHANIE** Why don't you just answer the question?

**PHIL** That's not how Meisner works.

**STEPHANIE** Yes, that Meisner. What a guy, huh? But back to you. Do you do dishes?

**PHIL** Are there dishes in the play?

**STEPHANIE** Yes, there are. I'm glad we solved that. So, I see here you played Romeo in that classic play *Romeo and Juliet* by William Shakespeare. That must have been challenging. Climbing up the side of Juliet.

**PHIL** Huh?

**STEPHANIE** Up the side of her house. Apartment. Balcony. Where she lived. Whatever. Wasn't a very good ending for Romeo, huh? Or for Juliet. Or for the friar. I mean, he—had to feel bad and all. So--how do you feel about working on new plays?

**PHIL** I love getting to be in the room and see the play evolve. Be a part of something from the very beginning.

**STEPHANIE** I feel the same way.

**PHIL** *The Seven Men of Hanukkah*. That's a great title. Great title. So should we get started with--

**STEPHANIE** Yes. Thank you. I love the title too. One man for each night.

*She passes a piece of paper to him.*

**STEPHANIE** And here are your sides for Man Number three.

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**PHIL** (overlapping) Huh--then why seven men? Hanukkah lasts for eight nights.

**STEPHANIE** Well, everyone knows *that*. That would be the obvious choice. To have eight men for eight nights, but instead, there will be seventeen because that's a big enough group for a real fight scene, you know?

**PHIL** But the play is called *The Seven Men of Hanukkah*.

**STEPHANIE** So, yes, wonderful, just go ahead and read.

**PHIL** (*reading*) "I love *you* like I have never loved another Stephanie. *You* are the one for me. *You, you, YOU* STEPHANIE." I'm sorry, your name is—

**STEPHANIE** St--rawf-anie.

**PHIL** St--rawf-anie. And what exactly is this play about?

**STEPHANIE** It's kind of a mash up really of play ideas—in a play. It takes place with *men* during Hanukkah, fighting, around a Christmas tree. And there's a love interest, named Stephanie, and also Noah's ark and the splitting of the Red Sea.

**PHIL** Right, so, could you explain what any of that has to do with--

**STEPHANIE** (overlapping) It's like *Romeo and Juliet* but a little different. We will talk about all of the details when we are in the rehearsal process. You have been offered the role of Man number three. Shalom!

**PHIL** Um,--thank you. Shalom means hello--or goodbye--or peace.

**STEPHANIE** Exactly. So hello and peace to this project until it's goodbye. If you could just give me all of your contact info—

**PHIL** I, um, generally like to read the script before I commit to--

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**STEPHANIE** Oh, I can't provide it just *now*--I thought you liked to see a play evolve.

**PHIL** Plays are generally written *before* auditions.

**STEPHANIE** Of course—the play—is written.

**PHIL** The sides you gave me were two lines.

**STEPHANIE** As a professional thesbian--

**PHIL** *Thespian*—

**STEPHANIE** You say thespian, I say thesbian. Tomato, tomato, thespian, thesbian, it's all the same.

**PHIL** No, actually, it's not. So, I'm sorry, I don't know that I'm so—available—as it turns out. (gathering his coat) But I wish you all the best. Good luck and happy—um--

*He's walking towards the door.*

**STEPHANIE** Wait. Stop. I—I'm only auditioning *you*.

*He stops. Turns. Returns.*

**PHIL** Why? And why would Sam say I had to do this? How do you even know--

**STEPHANIE** Through Sam's dog walker, Phyllis, who knows my cousin--

**PHIL** I haven't gotten a part in months and this is the part he said I *had to come out for—the part that was written just for me?*

**STEPHANIE** Well, it was kind of written just for you.

**PHIL** What?

**STEPHANIE** I didn't want to meet you, you know, so awkwardly, like over coffee.

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**PHIL** (to Stephanie) Yeah, this was much less awkward. (getting it) OOhhhhh. This. This thing is like a set-up? For a date. A date.

**STEPHANIE** I would call it a first *meeting*—of friends of ours who think we might want to meet. So, a meeting. Sort of. Of new people. Together. Meeting. For the first time.

**PHIL** But instead of just *meeting* in, say, a bar--

**STEPHANIE** Raymond and I don't drink.

**PHIL** Who's Raymond?

**STEPHANIE** My—cat. He only drinks water—out of a fountain—it kind of makes me want to pee all the time.

**PHIL** Couldn't you all have come up with a better play or lines or a *plan*--

**STEPHANIE** I know, it was just, this might surprise you, but I'm not a playwright.

**PHIL** Really? This is the best play—

**STEPHANIE** No--It's not the *best* play--

**PHIL** No, no it's not! I don't know what you, Sam, Phyllis or your cousin the dog walker were thinking--

**STEPHANIE** (overlapping) The dog walker is not my cousin—my cousin is--

**PHIL** Whatever!

**STEPHANIE** (overlapping) I'm just so tired of getting to know someone, sitting across from men in cafes, drinking stale tea, asking *What do you do? What do I do?* Like over and over again. My life is a series of getting to know you instead of being already known, you know? And what I know about you is that the reason you haven't gotten a

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part in months is that you haven't auditioned in months. Since she died. And I'm so, so sorry for your loss.

**PHIL** Is there anything you don't know about me?

**STEPHANIE** Lots.

**PHIL** Funny, I don't know anything about you.

**STEPHANIE** Well, I um, eh, er, I've watched every episode of *Friends*.

**PHIL** Great. That's just wonderful.

**STEPHANIE** And these glasses aren't real. I just wanted to look sexy. And smart. Like a librarian. Like a sexy, smart librarian.

**PHIL** What do you *do*?

**STEPHANIE** I'm a vet.

**PHIL** Really?

**STEPHANIE** Well, I play with the animals. Volunteer. It's not exactly the same. I —I'm kind of between things right now. But I do love animals. Like I'd generally rather be with them more than people.

**PHIL** Me, too.

**STEPHANIE** I would be so heartbroken if anything happened to Raymond. How old was she?

**PHIL** Twelve. Ralph had this beautiful double coat and was tan with black saddle. I kind of feel like, what good am I without her?

**STEPHANIE** How are you coping?

**PHIL** I run around the dog park with her friends. It's not the same.

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**STEPHANIE** Of course it's not.

**PHIL** And the holidays are the worst. No one to light candles with at Hanukkah. She would always bark along, you know? I would say Baruch and she would say (sounding like a dog barking but sounding like "Baruch") *Baaruukk*. Baruch (barking) *Baaruukk*. Baruch atah Adonai. (barking) *Baaruukk arrah arrarrahh*.

**STEPHANIE** I had no idea you were Jewish.

**PHIL** Oh, *really*, Ms. *Seven* nights of Hanukkah? I'm guessing you're *not*.

**STEPHANIE** Raymond's Zoroastrian, but I don't really practice anything now. But when I was a little, at Christmas, my parents would scrape together whatever was left after they paid Con Ed and bought us Sox and sweaters, and we'd go to New York and wait in line, in the cold, for half price tickets. We did this once a year. My fingers would still be cold when we sat in the theatre—but when the lights went up, it was like anything was possible. It was fun and exciting and playful and more joyful than life. And I just want meeting people to be—fun. And joyful. Like when did we stop having fun? And why?

*A moment. He scribbles something during the following.*

**STEPHANIE** (*cont'd*) And now the period between Thanksgiving and New Year's is like an endless night. It actually starts closer to October. Around Halloween when it's okay to be someone you're not. I usually play a witch and Raymond plays my cat.

**PHIL** What else did they tell you?

**STEPHANIE** Who?

**PHIL** Phyllis or the dog walker or the cousin—

**STEPHANIE** That you're a little quirky.

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**PHIL** *I'm a little quirky?*

**STEPHANIE** And kind. And that you do dishes, but I just wanted to make sure. And that you'd watch romantic comedies with Julia Roberts and that you wouldn't text and drive—which is really a problem even if it's just when you rent a car to get out of town or walking on the street and not paying attention and before you know it, splat you've been hit by a bus or worse.

*He scribbles one more thing.*

**PHIL** What's worse than being hit by a bus?

**STEPHANIE** I don't know. Global warming. The banks. A first date.

*He hands her a piece of paper.*

**PHIL** Here.

**STEPHANIE** What?

**PHIL** Audition.

*She reads.*

**STEPHANIE** “I love *you* like I have never loved another. *You* are the one for me. *You, you, YOU* Strawfeny.” It's Stephanie.

**PHIL** Seriously. I had no idea.

**STEPHANIE** I'm sorry. I'm sorry I wasted your time.

*She walks towards the door.*

**PHIL** Stephanie—

**STEPHANIE** I know. I forgot my “Welcome to the Audition” sign. You can keep it.

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*He hands her another piece of torn paper.*

**PHIL** Keep reading.

**STEPHANIE** Oh. Okay. (reading) “Act One, Scene One. A man and a woman in an empty room. The woman is acting like a crazy turd and the man is rather handsome, gorgeous actually. He hasn’t auditioned for anything in a long time. Until today. Apparently, neither has she. There’s something really endearing about—him. And she’s not so bad, either. Lights up.”

*Blackout.*

*End of play.*