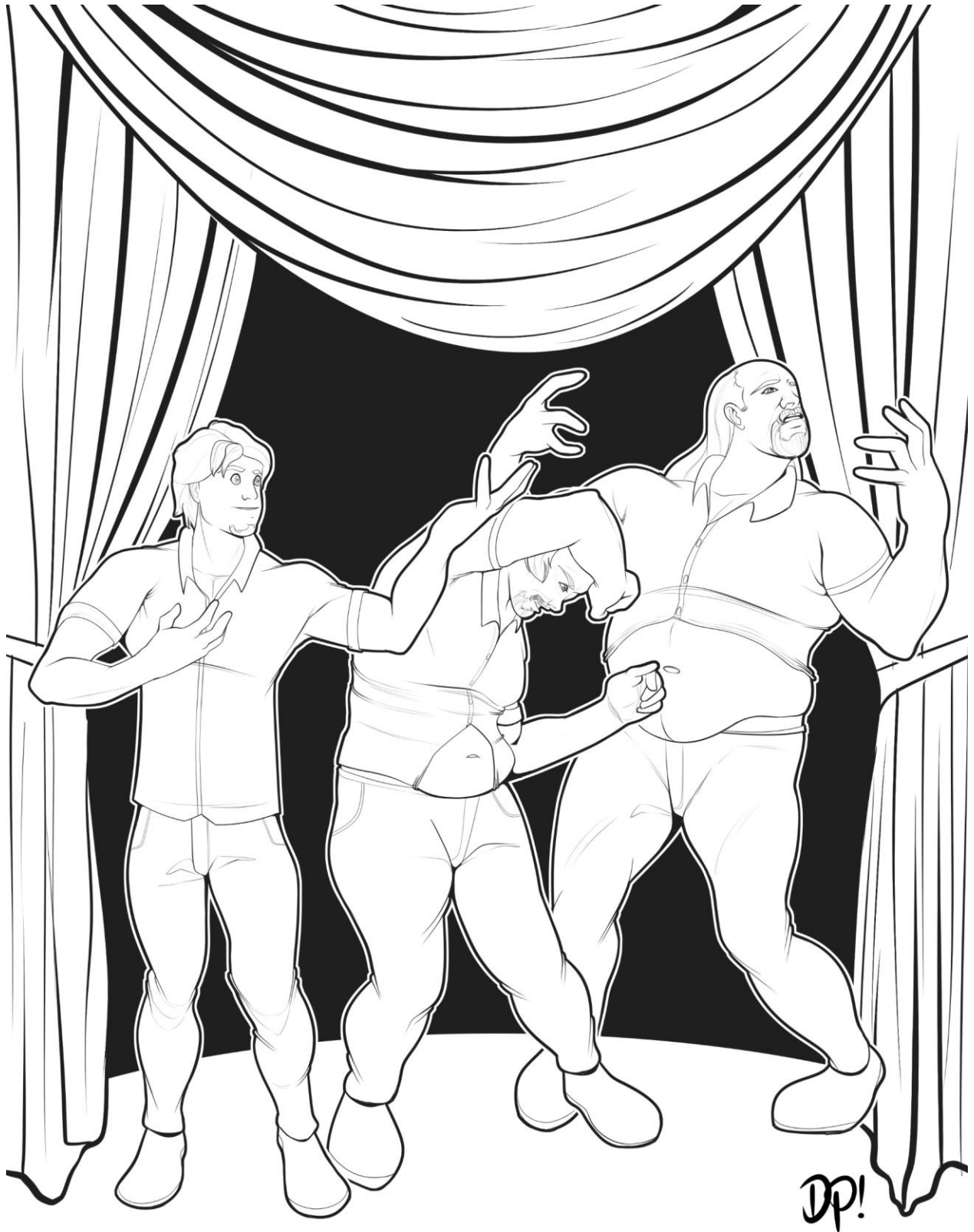


Starring role



DP!

Firn got up early a bit restless, he wasn't new to this but still he kept getting a little nervous with every audition despite having been at least five years on this. He was going from one casting to another getting until now just small roles, that day was, perhaps, his biggest opportunity so far. Feeling that kind of anxiety didn't worry him, he had never let himself be consumed by it and in fact he used it as motivation on stage, he had his lines studied and he was ready, as usual, to give his best.

He was auditioning for the co-starring role in a medium-budget play, thinking of it as his biggest challenge yet, it was a demanding work. He arrived in time at the appointment, however he had to wait a few minutes. He followed the indications of the producers and the director and then they assigned a partner to perform with him the scene. He became nervous like never before to the point of almost forgetting one of the most important lines but skillfully he was able to use that hesitation and make it part the prissy personality of the character he played in a convincing way. He impressed his public so much that, after giving him the most enthusiastic congratulations he had ever received, the judges impressed assured him the role after finishing all the formalities involved in his work.

Weeks later, he was rehearsing in the theater for what they seemed to be long and tiring hours all the heart and hard work of all those years started to pay off with his first main role, the only thing he could complain about were the moments he had to spend with the co-star, Gorman, a middle-aged actor who had made terrible professional decisions, so bad that by now he couldn't aspire to anything more than these medium/small gigs, good to launch the careers of novice actors but terrible for the older actors' resume. He was a man in his fifties, careless in appearance and with a few wrinkles already, both played the same character but at different ages and life stages, this play narrated a drama that traversed the protagonist's professional life and the deals and sacrifices he had to make to get to the top.

The night before the premiere most of the company went out to celebrate with a small toast the end of rehearsals, the alcohol ran though moderately in almost all of them, Firn noticed that Gorm was especially fond of the Scotch, and thinking more about his career than the health of his partner he spent most part of the evening of the night taking care of the old man consumption although with little success, he resigned himself hoping he could recover tomorrow and took the responsibility of taking him home.

In the opening day Firn arrived punctually at the agreed time, it was one of his best qualities, the entire cast started to arrive shortly except for Gorman. Firn started to get nervous, it was one of his worst qualities. He offered to reach him quickly at home, when he arrived he found him as he had feared, clueless with a bottle in his hand. After explaining quickly the situation, Gorm tried to act as sober as he could and returned with

Firm to the theatre where dizzy he fell asleep all of sudden. An improvised and risky solution by the director, Firm would have to act in both roles, which luckily were separated between acts.

Even more nervous and with all the stealth he was able to act he managed to take a drink from the flask he knew Gorm was hiding in the pocket of his blazer. The liquid burned from the mouth to the stomach and gave him a slight headache, he went on stage at his call.

He took the applause of the audience giving the best of himself in the role, the nerves and the headache served him as an engine. After the first act he took another discreet sip and ran to the makeup department. The work was somewhat crude but the white in his hair and the false beard and mustache attached to his natural goatee made him look somewhat older. Another long sip and he waited for his call to get on stage again.

The public had been warned of the last-minute change, yet he wasn't ready for the murmurs that began to invade the compound within minutes of appearing again. His head was buzzing and everything seemed to be spinning around, he noticed how the people in their seats pointed at him and the sounds of amazement intensified. A cold sweat began to drip down his forehead, he touched his soaked face and noticed how the makeup and fake beard slipped as if they were melting. After that he felt a fine itch on his fingers, a real moustache began to grow under his nose while his cheeks began to swell slightly and the small beard on his chin became to thicken. Desperate he ran his hand over his ache-exploding head where thin strands of hair started to fall from his forehead which appeared to look wider and began to show age marks, ironically the hair on the sides and on the back of the head began to grow longer.

The pain became unbearable, he knelt on the floor pressing his head with his hands noticing his limbs slow and clumsy, he was pulled by a weight he didn't understand and recognize his own body became a hard sensation as his arms grew thicker, pressing on the shirt he was wearing. He felt a blow to the stomach, his belly grew forcing the buttons of the shirt, and some of them gave in releasing a huge belly where before he had been a toned abdomen, a moan, almost of pleasure came out of his mouth for an unknown reason.

From their seats the audience remained expectant, now silent, watching captivated every step of this particular staging.

With his face on the floor, his hair fell to the sides of it, even though his forehead was bald. He tried to get up by his feet but his legs couldn't stand this new weight up because they still kept their original size, too skinny to carry that belly, he sat on the wooden stage floor and looked at the blinding light of the spotlights in front of him, He

couldn't see anything but suddenly he began to hear some timid applause, perhaps two or three confused people.

The sound seemed to awaken his body and give him new energies, as by reflection his legs began to move, sitting there on the floor he noticed how they thickened in the same way, bulging the muscles inside the pants, The fat thighs began to tighten limited by the fabric, he looked at the back of his hands, large, with thick fingers and hairy knuckles.

Now with a fully proportioned body standing up was easy. That one person who had been a 22-year-old man was now an adult in his 40s, he tried to button up his shirt but his belly had popped some buttons, the he just thought he couldn't imprison that round piece of flesh inside that tiny piece of cloth. He touched the face, a full and thick round beard adorned it, the hair dangled profusely from behind and the sides but the prominent and bald forehead gave him a somewhat ridiculous appearance. He looked to the front of the stage but the light was still shining with its maximum intensity. As the three timid applauses stood, they became a standing ovation; screams, whistles, cheers... a rumble that confused him as the curtain came down 20 minutes after he went on stage in the second act, leaving him covered in darkness off stage.