

FEDERAL HOLLYWOOD

By Jeff Dunne

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CHARACTERS

PATRICK	A guy who thought that he was going to have a chance to show off his talents on a television series
TIMOTHY	A guy who would rather live than speak up
AMANDA	A woman who has been abused by a system gone wrong
GUARD	One of the privileged elite who does not have to justify their existence to the government/producers
OFFICIATE	A mid-level elite doing a temporary stint ensuring the lower classes are compliant

SETTING

A holding room near the sound stage.

TIME

The near future.

SCENE

(Amanda and Timothy are sitting in a small room. Amanda is holding a bloody rag against her just-stopped-bleeding forehead. Patrick is forcibly pushed into the room, and the door slams behind him.)

PATRICK

(Sarcastic)

They requested that I keep you company.

TIMOTHY

So I see.

PATRICK

Until it's my time.

TIMOTHY

Right.

PATRICK

You okay?

AMANDA

Peachy. Why do you ask?

PATRICK

Uhhh... no reason. Is that part of your... you know?

(Amanda just stares at him. He gives up, turns to Timothy.)

So what's your bit?

TIMOTHY

I'm a painter.

PATRICK

I thought you only get like ninety seconds in front of the judges.

TIMOTHY

Yyyep.

PATRICK
Oh, brother. You're fucked.

TIMOTHY
Yyyep.

PATRICK
I'm singer. And I juggle.

TIMOTHY
No kidding. What do you juggle?

PATRICK
Cows.

(They look at him incredulously.)

Pins, balls, scarves.

AMANDA
(Sing-songy)
Boring.

PATRICK
I sing pretty good.

TIMOTHY
Everyone sings. You see that little four-year-old girl last week? Beautiful voice. Adorable. Hate to break it to you, but you're not adorable.

AMANDA
You might have had a chance if it was cows.

PATRICK
(To Amanda)
So what's your talent?

AMANDA
Snark.

PATRICK
(Trying to be helpful...)
Well, maybe you can—

AMANDA

Oh drop it, sunshine. I might as well just cut my throat right now.

PATRICK

Is that how you... (*motions to her head*). Self-inflicted?

AMANDA

No. The guy who was in here with me before Tim here did this. That's what you get for falling asleep.

PATRICK

Why...?

AMANDA

I guess he figured that one fewer competitors means better odds for him.

PATRICK

How long have you *been* in here?

AMANDA

Two days. Three days.

(Patrick is clearly surprised. She points a finger around.)

No windows, no watches. Who can tell?

(Patrick looks around, sees no food or drink.)

PATRICK

Do you even get food?

(She snorts, and Patrick turns to Timothy.)

TIMOTHY

Not yet.

PATRICK

How—

TIMOTHY

About a day.

(The door opens, and a brightly, cheerily dressed – but heavily armed – guard enters. He points at Amanda.)

GUARD

It's your slot, honey! What's your gig? Some kind of horror act or something?

AMANDA

Go to hell.

(The guard happily writes it down.)

GUARD

Go... to... hell. Whatever you say, honey. Let's go.

(Amanda gets up and stumbles to the door. The guard pushes her out harshly, then turns back to the other two with a broad Hollywood smile.)

Toodles!

PATRICK

They're just going to send her out like that in front of the judges?

TIMOTHY

Yyyep.

PATRICK

But that's not fair. We need to register a complaint!

(Timothy chuckles just a bit. Then more. Then more still, until it is a full-blown laugh at the most absurd thing he has ever heard.)

TIMOTHY

You think the government gives a damn about your complaints? That's rich. That's really rich. You want to complain? Go hit that button right there.

PATRICK

What is it?

TIMOTHY

That's the I-want-to-talk-to-someone button.

(Patrick starts to move towards it.)

But I wouldn't if I were you.

PATRICK

Why?

TIMOTHY

The last guy who was here pushed it. Didn't work out so well for him.

PATRICK

How so?

TIMOTHY

They deducted ten points from his score, and—

PATRICK

I juggle scarves and sing. I don't have a chance anyway.

(He pushes the button, and there is a buzzer as it summons someone.)

TIMOTHY

...And there were some other penalties as well.

PATRICK

(Turning towards Timothy...)

Other penalties? Like wha—

(The door bursts open, and a contest officiate enters followed by the guard. Before anyone can say anything, the officiate hits Patrick with a stun stick, which leaves him twitching on the ground, writhing in pain.)

TIMOTHY

Like that.

OFFICIATE

(Pleasantly...)

Good afternoon, and thank you once again for participating in Survivor's Got Talent, Twenty Twenty Five. What can I do for you?

PATRICK

I... I... I hav... have a que... have a question.

(The Officiate motions to the guard, who "helps" Patrick up into a chair very roughly.)

OFFICIATE

Of course. We're here to answer your questions. How can we help?

PATRICK

I... *(finally covering from the shock...)* I don't think this is fair!

(Officiate makes a hand gesture, and the guard starts to take a syringe.)

They said that people would be scouted for talent, but—

OFFICIATE

People *are* being scouted for talent. How else can we know where to place people in society? Those with the most talent should be at the top, wouldn't you agree?

PATRICK

Yeah, I suppose, but—

(The guard injects Patrick with something.)

What the hell!

OFFICIATE

Oh, don't worry about that. Just something to take the edge off.

PATRICK

Take the edge off?!

OFFICIATE

Right. To relax you. Now what was your concern?

PATRICK

This whole gameshow is my concern! Nobody said anything about placement in society! All they said was that we'd all get a chance to show off our talents.

OFFICIATE

And you are. We're doing precisely what we said.

PATRICK

The woman who was in here, she... *(He struggles for a moment to remember what he was saying.)* She was in no condition to compete!

OFFICIATE

Knowing how someone performs under pressure is important.

GUARD

Very important.

(Patrick tries to turn around to face him, but the Officiate hits him again with the stun stick.)

OFFICIATE

Face forward, please. Stay focused. I don't have time to wait around while you get distracted.

PATRICK

This isn't right! Nobody said anything about torture!

OFFICIATE

(He laughs kindly)

Torture? Whatever are you talking about?

PATRICK

Sleep deprivation! Stun sticks! The woman who just got taken out had a big gash on her head from—

OFFICIATE

That's not torture. It's entertainment. This is what the people asked for.

PATRICK

What?!

OFFICIATE

Look, Gamma seven two seven one three, we—

PATRICK

What? What were all those... (*struggling suddenly to stay conscious from the drug...*) numbers?

OFFICIATE

That's your identifier. We told you to memorize that when you registered to be on the show.

PATRICK

Memorize...

OFFICIATE

Right. Did you memorize it?

PATRICK

I...

OFFICIATE

Now listen, Gamma seven two seven one three. What did we say we were going to do?

PATRICK

Com... combine...

OFFICIATE

Right. Combined, interactive network programming. Everyone would have a chance to compete for grand prizes. Like better jobs, more pay, and the right to have children.

PATRICK

Wha...? Not fair. Not... wha... promised. Can't... feel... dizzy.

OFFICIATE

Hmmm. Sometimes the injection can have that effect. Help him out onto the stage. We shouldn't hold him here if he thinks the contest isn't fair.

(The guard helps Patrick out. Officiate turns to Timothy.)

Do you have questions too?

TIMOTHY

No.

OFFICIATE

You sure? No concerns about fairness?

TIMOTHY

No.

OFFICIATE

Good. The president has emphasized how important it is that everyone is happy with the talent assessment process. Are you happy with the process?

TIMOTHY

I...

OFFICIATE

Are you excited to be competing for fabulous prizes? Because if you aren't happy, we want to hear your concerns. We're here to protect your rights. Are you sure you don't have any concerns?

(Guard enters again.)

GUARD

They're sending him on next. He said that he juggles, but he didn't ask for any props.

OFFICIATE

That's fine. He would have asked if he needed them. This is his big moment in front of the judges, after all.

(Officiate looks at Timothy one last time with a pleasant "are you sure you don't have any questions?" look, and then when Timothy says nothing, he walks out. The guard looks at Timothy for a few more moments, then turns to leave.)

TIMOTHY

Hey. Did you *compete* to get this job?

GUARD

Don't be silly. My uncle's a senator.

(Guard exits. Lights out.)