

PLAY #10 THE FRONT

by

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CHARACTERS

VICTOR	A homeless man camped out behind "The Front", a high end Italian restaurant.
MAURIZIO	One of the owners of "The Front"
CHRISTA	His wife, and the other restaurant owner

SCENE 1

(At Rise: VICTOR's encampment behind a restaurant, between a walk-in cooler and a dumpster. VICTOR is looking through collected mementos in a shoe box. MAURIZIO exits from the restaurant with a case of lemons. He sets them down.)

MAURIZIO

Victor! I've told you time and again. You can't stay back here. Like it's a free hotel room or something.

VICTOR

Why not? I'm not hurting anybody.

MAURIZIO

You smell. The food out here absorbs your smell, and my customers don't like it. They say, "It's very good, Maurie. But what's this background taste like strong cheese?"

VICTOR

That's bullshit.

MAURIZIO

It's true! And then I have to make something up... About how I add some fermented this or that. They wonder why there's always fermented things in dishes. It's bad for business.

VICTOR

Then why don't you give me some money to get a room?

MAURIZIO

And what's in it for me?

VICTOR

You get rid of me.

MAURIZIO

If I call the cops I can get rid of you for free.

VICTOR

Tell Christa I want to talk with her.

MAURIZIO

Victor. Don't make me call the police.

VICTOR

You keep threatening. Go ahead and do it!

MAURIZIO

I will.

VICTOR

What are those things?

MAURIZIO

Rotten lemons.

VICTOR

You're throwing them out?

MAURIZIO

What else would I do with rotten lemons?

VICTOR

Can I have 'em?

MAURIZIO

You cannot have them.

VICTOR

But if they're going to the garbage.

MAURIZIO

They're garbage. They belong in the garbage. Move your stuff by tomorrow morning. Or I'm calling the cops.

VICTOR

Get me Christa.

MAURIZIO

She doesn't want to talk to you.

VICTOR

Oh yes she does!

(MAURIZIO exits. VICTOR looks over the lemons. He tosses some out. Pulls out a pocket knife and slices one open. Smells it. Squeezes some in his hair. Rubs some under his armpits. He goes to

the dumpster and rifles through it. He
pulls out a citrus squeezer. Pause.)

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2

(At Rise: The following morning. VICTOR has set up a sign that says, "Victor's Miracle Lemonade \$2". His pitcher is empty. He's counting his money. MAURIZIO and CHRISTA enter.)

CHRISTA

Hi Victor!

VICTOR

I've been meaning to talk to you.

MAURIZIO

What did I tell you, Victor?

CHRISTA

Give him a break, Maurie!

VICTOR

I've got a business now!

MAURIZIO

It's illegal to sell things on the street without a license.

CHRISTA

What kind of business?

MAURIZIO

And what did I tell you about those rotten lemons?

VICTOR

People love it! Twenty-five dollars in less than 2 hours! That's twelve cups. Plus a dollar tip. I threw out the rotten ones. But they weren't all rotten.

CHRISTA

That's wonderful, Victor.

MAURIZIO

Christa, please don't encourage him. I've told you about this.

CHRISTA

Why don't you quit yapping for one minute. And see past your own personal biases.

VICTOR

Can I buy some more lemons?

MAURIZIO

We need our lemons.

CHRISTA

We can do without lemons.

MAURIZIO

We'll have to take the lemon sponge off the menu.

CHRISTA

The produce guy comes the day after tomorrow.

MAURIZIO

Christa!

CHRISTA

MAURIE!

MAURIZIO

Alright alright...

CHRISTA

We'll front it to you, Victor. Two cases. Consider it a small business loan.

MAURIZIO

Thirteen dollars a case...

CHRISTA

He'll pay it back.

VICTOR

I'll pay it back, Maurie. I will. I really will.

BLACKOUT

END OF SCENE

SCENE 3

(The end of the next day. VICTOR is looking much better, has clean clothes. He's counting money. MAURIE enters.)

VICTOR

Hey Maurie! Ten. Twenty. And six. For two cases. I upped the price to three dollars. Still. Two cases. Gone in a day. One hundred. Fifty dollars. Total.
(MAURIZIO takes the money.)

MAURIZIO

Keep in mind we sold them to you on wholesale. So next time there'll be a markup.

VICTOR

Who's your produce guy? Maybe I'll just go direct.

MAURIZIO

You trying to be a wise guy?
(CHRISTA pokes her head out the restaurant backdoor.)

CHRISTA

Maurie! Fabio hasn't shown up again! He hasn't even called. Why do you keep hiring these numb-nut cooks you gotta teach them how to fry an egg?!!

VICTOR

He said he cooked at Palazzo.

CHRISTA

Did you call his references?! (Pause.) Victor!

VICTOR

Good evening, Madam.

CHRISTA

Victor? What's come over you? I didn't recognize you. Did you recognize him?

MAURIZIO

Of course I recognized him!

VICTOR

I cleaned up a little. Went to Good Will this morning.
Bought some slacks.

CHRISTA

You're looking sharp.

VICTOR

I even got some cologne. Two dollars.

CHRISTA

Hmmnnn... Maurie? What are we going to do about this?
This problem?

MAURIZIO

I dunno.

CHRISTA

I have an idea. Victor?

MAURIZIO

Christa? I know what you're thinking.

CHRISTA

You have another plan? (Pause.) Then shut up about
it... And deal with the consequences.

MAURIZIO

But Christa...

CHRISTA

Are you gonna chop two dozen onions and have our three
signature sauces done before our first reservation
arrives at 7:30? We're way behind!

MAURIZIO

But the Health Department...

CHRISTA

Screw them! You wanna lose this business, Maurizio?
Victor?

VICTOR

What?

CHRISTA

You want a job?

VICTOR

You're inviting me in there? To... The front?

MAURIZIO

Not all the way to the front. The kitchen!

VICTOR

I don't know. I've never been up there.

MAURIZIO

He's never been in a kitchen!

CHRISTA

I have an innate sense. He's gonna learn fast. It's okay, Victor. You can come in. Come on!

VICTOR

Really?

CHRISTA

We'll pay you more than you made with the lemonade.

MAURIZIO

Christ! Just make sure you wash your hands!
(VICTOR begins slowly creeping toward
the door. He looks back at his bed
roll.)

VICTOR

Maybe I could... Put that inside?

MAURIZIO

Absolutely not.

CHRISTA

Maurie and I will talk about it, Victor. Go ahead.
We'll get started.

(VICTOR enters the restaurant.)

Just be good to him, Maurie. I have a very good
feeling about this. I think business is going to pick
up.

MAURIZIO

What are you? A fortune teller?

CHRISTA

No. But I'm always right. (Pause.) Aren't I?

BLACKOUT

END OF PLAY