

# WALLS THAT AREN'T THERE

By Justin Alejandro Gonzales

Cast of Characters (in order of appearance):

0 males, 0 females, 15+ either

Various mimes [m/f] . . . . Dressed in the stereotypical fashion (gloves, stripes, makeup).

LVS monitors [m/f] . . . . Imposing security guards.

Riley Laude [m/f] . . . . Bombastic owner and operator of Laude Voice Solutions.

Clamorfort [m/f] . . . . Shrewd secretary and advisor to Riley Laude.

Blare [m/f] . . . . Head LVS monitor.

Chelbi [m/f] . . . . Mime youth who aspires to make a change.

Dada [m/f] . . . . Chelbi's level-headed friend and coworker at the factory.

Racquet [m/f] . . . . LVS lawyer.

Premier Blaise [m/f] . . . . Leader of the Laudeville mime village.

Specialist monitors [m/f] . . . . Monitors with a higher rank and fancier uniform.

Jean [m/f] . . . . Bitter mime who was imprisoned long ago.

Romeo [m/f] . . . . Specialist monitor.

Quebec [m/f] . . . . Specialist monitor.

Sierra [m/f] . . . . Specialist monitor.

*Characters have been assigned genders in the script for the sake of convenience. Please alter pronouns as needed.*

Time:

50 years since the hostile occupation of the native mime lands by Laude Voice Solutions.

Setting:

(Scenes 1, 4, 6, 12) Bustling Laude Voice Solutions megaphone factory.

(Scenes 2, 3, 8, 13) Quiet mime village of Laudeville.

(Scene 7, 9, 11) Dank, dark dungeon below the megaphone factory.

(Scene 10) Riley Laude's personal office.

Note on Mime Dialogue:

Unless otherwise specified, when mime characters have lines directed to other mimes, they are not speaking to them directly. Instead, they are using sign language and their lines are being delivered by disembodied voices as a "translation" of what they are saying. Jean is the sole exception to this; Jean speaks directly unless otherwise noted.

## Scene 1 – Laude Voice Solutions Megaphone Factory

(The factory floor is crowded with MIMES who are busy assembling megaphones. They work silently but occasionally glance at one another and make small gestures. Sunlight shines in from outside through large windows. Official LVS MONITORS walk the floor. RILEY LAUDE enters on the catwalk, overlooking her workers. CLAMORFORT follows after.)

LAUDE

Good morning, everybody! The sun is shining bright, and the line is running smooth! What a fantastic day to be a capitalist, eh, Clamorfort?!

CLAMORFORT

I agree, ma'am.

LAUDE

Of course, of course you do! Well everybody, I didn't drop in just to say hello! Clamorfort's got some very important news about a very special day, so listen up! Clamorfort! Expound, if you will!

CLAMORFORT

Yes, ma'am.

(pulls a lever to stop the assembly line)

Workers, your attention. As you may well know, we are quickly approaching the official 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the founding of this building, the Laude Voice Solutions Megaphone Factory. Founded by our very own Riley Laude—

LAUDE

Hello, everybody, hello!

CLAMORFORT

Ahem. Founded by our very own Riley Laude, this factory was the catalyst for what has become the most successful vocal projection device company in the world. We here at Laude Voice Solutions recognize the contributions of you, the workers, in making our success possible. To give back, on the anniversary date two days from today, we will be dismissing you from your duties six hours early . . .

LAUDE

You're very welcome, everybody! It's the very least that I could do!

CLAMORFORT

. . . However, in order to make up for this lost time, you are now required to double your rate of production for both today and tomorrow. Failure to do so will result in disciplinary action. Is this perfectly understood?

(The MIMES reluctantly give a thumbs-up.)

CLAMORFORT

Excellent. Good luck, workers. Ma'am, anything else you would like to add?

LAUDE

Why yes, there is!

(putting on a serious tone)

This coming Thursday is very important to me. That means I want no slacking, and absolutely no twinkle-fingers from any one of you. My monitors will be watching, and they have been advised to give no warnings, isn't that right?

MONITORS

Yes, ma'am! Of course! You got it! Etc.

LAUDE

(taking a breath and returning to typical tone)

Well everybody, I hate to get serious on you like that, but the 50-year anniversary doesn't come around every day! Good luck! Back to work!

(RILEY and CLAMORFORT exit. On the way out, RILEY pulls the lever to start the assembly line back up at double speed. The MIMES begin to work frantically. We see the duration of the workday, represented by the changing light from the windows. Some MIMES may suffer injuries, others may be berated by MONITORS, a few may even faint from exhaustion. Once it becomes night, a monitor enters on the catwalk and deactivates the assembly line.)

MONITOR

9pm! Clean up and go home!

(The monitor exits. The MIMES very warily make their way out of the factory. After they've all left, Head Monitor BLARE meets CLAMORFORT on the catwalk with the day's report. He has a distinct key hanging from his hip.)

BLARE

Clamorfort, how are you? Me and my monitors have had a rough one, let me tell you.

CLAMORFORT

A rhetorical question, Blare. The report, please?

BLARE

'Course. Here it is.

(handing over the report)

A couple of hitches, but the day's goal of double production rate was met handily. I've got to say, I'm kind of impressed. I wouldn't want to be on that assembly line, that's for sure.

CLAMORFORT

Very impressive indeed. And what of the sub-level operations?

BLARE

Nothing to report. As usual. I doubt we have anything to worry about at this point. Might have to start making my own fun!

CLAMORFORT

Do you mean to imply that you are blowing off your duties as unimportant?

BLARE

'Course not! It just feels like a formality is all I'm saying.

CLAMORFORT

It's not. Don't let your guard down.

(a beat as he reads over the report)

Thank you, Blare. You are dismissed.

BLARE

Alright. Have a good night.

(BLARE exits. CLAMORFORT continues reading the report.)

CLAMORFORT

Hm. Very impressive.

(CLAMORFORT exits.)

## Scene 2 – Laudeville

(The edge of the village, where some elaborate huts are scattered about. The area is surrounded by a tall fence. An even taller pole stands prominently in the open, which features a terminal with a microphone at the base and large speakers at the top. The MIMES shamle back to their homes after the long day. CHELBI and DADA enter. They appear to have suffered minor injuries.)

DADA

So, what are you going to do with your six hours?

CHELBI

Six hours? What are you talking about?

DADA

They said that we're getting off work six hours early on Thursday. That means an extra six hours to do whatever we want! So, what are you going to do with them? I'm going to be getting some boxing practice in!

(DADA attempts to pantomime a box, but it somehow falls apart.)

DADA

See, still need practice.

CHELBI

Well, Dada, I'll be doing what I normally do: sitting in my hut waiting for the next boring, awful day in that awful factory.

DADA

You should get out more.

CHELBI

You know what? I'd love to, but if you haven't noticed . . .

(gesturing to the surrounding fences)

We happen to live in a cage. Where am I going to go? What is there to do here but sit around, look at each other, and work?

DADA

Correct me if I'm wrong, Chelbi, but I happen to recall that your boxing needs work, too.

CHELBI

(playfully)

Shut up. I happen to be great at boxing, thank you.

(DADA scoffs, continuing to make attempts but messing up each time. CHELBI sometimes helps put it back up, but mostly watches with a tired amusement.)

CHELBI

Where does all of this energy come from? Especially after today. I mean, look at us; we barely got off with scrapes and bruises this time. We could have died today if we weren't being careful!

DADA

But we didn't, right?

CHELBI  
(with grave realization)

We could've died today.

DADA

You said that already.

CHELBI  
No, Dada, listen to me. Think about what that really means. They're celebrating their fiftieth year of treating us like garbage by halfway killing us! Does that not bother you? Six extra hours on a Thursday night is not worth dying for.

DADA  
(deflating)

Yeah, Chelbi, I know that. Do you think I don't? I work right next to you. I know how much this place sucks just as much as you. Can you blame me for trying to find something positive?

CHELBI  
I guess not. It's just . . . so frustrating. Unbelievably frustrating! That they get to walk all over us and we're powerless to stop them.

DADA

I know.

CHELBI  
(beat)

I guess that's not necessarily true . . .

DADA

What?

CHELBI  
You know what I mean; we're technically not totally powerless . . .

DADA  
Chelbi, no. If it's going to be anybody it's not going to be me, and for the love of Marceau, it better not be you.

CHELBI  
Don't worry, I don't think I'm dumb enough to do that.

DADA

I know.

(playfully)

Just checking, though.

CHELBI

(looking up at the sky)

I should probably be getting to sleep soon. Normal people need that, you know.

DADA

Ugh, normal people. Enjoy your “sleep,” whatever that is.

CHELBI

Good night, Dada.

DADA

Good night, Chelbi. Rest well.

(CHELBI and DADA exit in different directions.)

### Scene 3 – Laudeville

(It is now morning. BLARE enters, followed by RACQUET who is holding a clipboard loaded with paper. They approach the pole’s terminal.)

BLARE

(sighing)

Geez, am I not prepared for today. Yesterday wore me out, that’s for sure. Heck, I wasn’t even down on the floor; just watching them scramble around took something out of me. How about you, Racquet? You had a busy day yesterday?

RACQUET

Oh, well, you know. The job of a corporate lawyer is never done. Paperwork, paperwork, paperwork! Just lots and lots of . . . of paper. Not much different from a typical day at the office.

BLARE

Yeah, I get you. “Head monitor” ain’t the most exciting job in the world either.

(checking the time)

Looks like it’s about that time. You have the, uh . . .

RACQUET

Contract?

(referring to his clipboard)

Of course, why would I not?

BLARE

No, not the contract, the, uh . . .

(snapping his fingers)

Bulletin! Do you have the bulletin?



RACQUET

Right here.

(RACQUET hands BLARE a sheet of paper from the clipboard.)

BLARE

I've doing this long enough; you'd think I'd remember what the darn thing is called. Can't just call them the "morning announcements" or something normal like that, I guess.

RACQUET

Doesn't sound official enough for Clamorfort, I assume. You know how Clamorfort is about sounding official.

BLARE

Trust me, I know all about it.

(mimicking CLAMORFORT)

"And what of the sub-level operations?" Just call it how it is, right?

(looking at the announcements)

Anyway, better get this thing going.

(BLARE activates the terminal with his key and presses a button. The speakers crackle to life and sound off an obnoxiously loud rooster crow, followed by a prerecorded message.)

LAUDE (VOICE)

Good morning, everybody! It's time to rise and shine for another day of hard, gratifying work! Remember, every morning in Laudeville is a privilege; don't be late! Good luck, be safe, and mind the monitors! Standby for the morning bulletin!

(Another rooster crow. BLARE presses another button on the terminal and leans into the microphone.)

BLARE

Good morning, everyone. It's your pal Blare today with the, uh, "morning bulletin." Hope you all got your rest because, well, we all know you'll need it. I don't know how you guys do it, really. Troopers, every single one of you. Anyway.

(As BLARE reads the announcements, MIMES begin to be seen walking by towards the factory or exiting their huts.)

BLARE

"Today is Wednesday, July 29, 2180. Notice: Please remember that the mandatory double production rate requirement is still in effect. This mandate will continue to be strictly enforced. Yesterday, efficiency was lower than desired; therefore, disciplinary

action will be issued to offending workers upon arrival at the factory. In addition, lunch break for today shall be reduced from thirty minutes to fifteen. You are advised not to make this mistake again. For lunch: bread, beans, and corn. Do not ask for extra portions, as monitors have been advised to refuse such requests. Yesterday's worker of the day was: Pinitri Renaud. Congratulations: your "commendation pastry" may be received from the dining hall. We have gone: 0 days without an incident. Increased assembly line speed is not an excuse for recklessness. Any injuries suffered under preventable circumstances will not be compensated for. This concludes the morning bulletin. Stay alert and have a good day." Well, that's it from me. You heard the announcements: don't hurt yourselves in there if you can help it. Bye guys, thanks.

(BLARE turns off the mic and turns towards RACQUET, which reminds him of something else to say. BLARE activates the mic again.)

BLARE

Oh, and could someone make sure Blaise is awake, please? We're not looking to stand out here for longer than we need to.

(A passing mime acknowledges BLARE and exits towards the village.)

BLARE

Hey, thanks pal. Alright, that's all, bye!

(BLARE turns off the mic and deactivates the terminal.)

RACQUET

Now we wait. Hopefully, the Premier shouldn't be too long.

BLARE

I'm surprised that a geezer like Blaise is even alive after yesterday. I wouldn't hope for a speedy entrance.

(They silently wait for BLAISE to arrive. RACQUET breaks the silence.)

RACQUET

I don't know how people can live like this. I couldn't bear it!

BLARE

It's not so bad. I spent the night in one of those huts of theirs once. Surprisingly cozy.

RACQUET

Interesting . . . but that's not what I was talking about. Probably should have specified, sorry. I meant how quiet it must be all the time. Never being able to speak. Not

knowing what your own voice even sounds like. It makes me uncomfortable thinking about it.

BLARE

I mean, these guys have been mute all their lives. Not speaking is a religious thing, right, so I'm sure it doesn't bother them much. Plus I've heard it's super forbidden, so they wouldn't be allowed to talk even if they wanted to. Kind of crazy.

RACQUET

Do you think they ever whisper to themselves when no one is around to listen? Maybe whistle a little tune under their breaths?

BLARE

(chuckling at the idea)

Hard to say if they even have the temptation, you know? I'm telling you they take their silence seriously. Breaking it can apparently get you in deep trouble.

RACQUET

Have you ever witnessed a mime speaking before?

BLARE

Not firsthand, but there was an incident once. And, uh, even though it was a while ago, I'm not really supposed to talk about it, sorry.

RACQUET

Sure, sure. Sounds like an ordeal.

(They wait quietly for a little longer before RACQUET pipes up again.)

RACQUET

You said you spent the night out here once?

BLARE

Mm-hm. In a hut. That one I am allowed to talk about! Now bear with me, this story is kind of wild . . .

(The same mime from before passes by and gestures off-stage, then exits towards the factory. BLAISE enters.)

BLARE

Remind me to tell you later.

(to BLAISE)

Morning, Blaise!

(BLAISE nods, then approaches RACQUET. BLAISE stands impatiently and expectantly.)

RACQUET

Good morning, Premier Blaise. I can see that you are eager to go, so I'll skip the formalities.

(taking on an official tone)

Premier Blaise: as the official legal representative of Laude Voice Solutions Inc., I am obligated to offer the opportunity of cancelling this contract to the acting Premier of the people of Laudeville. In doing so, all terms outlined in the aforementioned contract shall be nullified and the people of Laudeville shall reserve the right to cease, prevent, or refuse any and all interaction with Laude Voice Solutions Inc. or its affiliates for the foreseeable future. If you choose to do so, you must sign your name and give verbal confirmation of the cancelation. If not, I will be obligated to offer this opportunity again after a period of 24 hours. What is your choice, Premier?

(BLAISE shakes her head "no.")

RACQUET

Thought so. Have a good day, Premier Blaise.

(BLAISE exits.)

BLARE

It's never going to happen. Especially not with Blaise in charge. Never met anyone as stubborn as that coot.

RACQUET

So it would seem. So, your wild story?

BLARE

Right! So, I was heading back to my office after lunch, minding my own business, you know, when, and you're not going to believe this . . .

(BLARE and RACQUET exit.)

#### **Scene 4 – Laude Voice Solutions Megaphone Factory**

(It is late morning. The MIMES have adapted somewhat to the increased speed but continue to make mistakes occasionally. They "whisper" to each other when the patrolling MONITORS are not looking in their direction. CHELBI and DADA attempt to have a conversation while staying on top of their work.)

DADA

You look beat. More than usual. Couldn't sleep?

CHELBI

Awake until 5. I was thinking. What we talked about.

DADA

That's not good. Let it go.

CHELBI

I can't. 50 years? 50 too many.

(They stop their conversation as a monitor passes behind, scrutinizing everybody's hands. DADA and CHELBI work diligently until they pass, then continue.)

CHELBI

I feel responsibility. To act.

DADA

Bad idea. Acting is suicide. We discussed this.

CHELBI

Change means sacrifice. I am willing.

DADA

We can't win. Don't be heroic. Be alive!

(The monitor passes again.)

DADA

Speaking won't rally. You'll be hated. You'll be killed!

CHELBI

Maybe not. With the right words . . . there's a chance.

DADA

Someone tried before! We're still here. They didn't return.

CHELBI

Someone tried? Who?

(The monitor passes again.)

CHELBI

When?

DADA

Years ago. Who? It doesn't matter!

CHELBI

Things can change. They do. They will.

(The monitor briskly approaches DADA and CHELBI and grabs them by the back of their necks.)

MONITOR

You snow-faced zebras really thought you could have a little chat without me noticing, huh? I'll have you mutes know that I'm not blind. Now listen, this isn't even my shift, so I'm going to let ya off easy. Once. Got it?

(DADA and CHELBI nod.)

MONITOR

(letting them go)

Awesome. Now get back to work, and don't let me catch you again!

(The sound of a large machine malfunctioning and jamming is heard offstage. The assembly line comes to an abrupt emergency stop. Everyone looks in that direction.)

MONITOR

Oh . . . oh my god.

(into a hand radio)

Code 0. We have a Code 0 on Line 6.

(to the surrounding MIMES)

Everyone out! Move it! Wait outside until we give an all-clear!

(The MIMES scramble out in horror. MONITORS direct them to the exits while others in special uniforms flock towards the incident. Once the stage is empty, time passes forward by about an hour or so. The SPECIALISTS move across the stage with a body bag. Soon after, the MONITORS lead the MIMES back on to the floor. CLAMORFORT enters on the catwalk.)

CLAMORFORT

(addressing the MIMES)

There has been an unfortunate incident today. Whether it was the product of carelessness or divided attention, it has resulted in the regrettable loss of a valuable worker. This incident marks the first casualty to occur within this facility. And while this may be extremely upsetting for you all, what you feel is nothing in comparison to how absolutely livid I am. If I had my way, you'd all be back to work by now, but Riley insists that you have the rest of the day off. To mourn. This is a level of grace that I cannot begin to fathom, so I suggest that you accept it for all that it's worth. However, do not think that this will go without consequences. I have simply been instructed to delay your

punishment, which I can assure you will be severe. Until then, understand this: your colleague's untimely demise should serve as a lesson. An example. A warning, for what happens when a servant disobeys their master's orders. Go home.

(CLAMORFORT exits. DADA warily looks at CHELBI, who has been casting a piercing stare into space. CHELBI looks at DADA.)

CHELBI

Things have changed.

### **Scene 5 – Laudeville**

(CHELBI and DADA stand amongst a group of MIMES. They are gathered before a small platform with a lectern, both branded with the LVS logo. MONITORS flank the crowd.)

DADA

(to CHELBI)

There's no stopping you then? You're committed?

(CHELBI does not respond.)

DADA

Please, tell me you're starting to second-guess yourself.

CHELBI

I know what I want to say, I just need to figure out how to say it.

DADA

Then I guess that's a no. However you do it, just make sure you tell them that I told you not to.

CHELBI

What kind of friend are you, anyway? Friends support one another. Especially in times like this. How will I persuade them to my side if I stand alone?

DADA

That is a very good question. I would consider pondering on that thought for a little bit longer.

(BLARE enters and stands behind the lectern. BLAISE follows closely behind. A group of SPECIALIST MONITORS enter with an LVS-branded casket and sets it in front of the lectern, then exit.)

BLARE

(solemn)

Hello, everyone. I understand if you're not happy to see me. I get it. But . . . I wanted to say that, um . . . I am sorry for your loss. Really. And . . . if it were my choice, I wouldn't post guards at a funeral. But, it's not. So . . . believe it or not, I feel for you. And, uh, you have my condolences. Anyway.

(gesturing to BLAISE)

Premier Blaise?

(BLARE steps off of the platform and BLAISE steps up to the lectern.)

BLAISE

(to the MIMES)

Marcel!

MIMES

Marceau!

BLAISE

My brothers and my sisters. We gather here together today under the most tragic of circumstances. Our brother, Gigolo Pierpont, has met an unbecoming end at the whims of a heartless machine. But while death may be the end of our journey on this Earth, it is the beginning of another in the streets of Paradis.

MIMES

That's right, amen, etc.

BLAISE

Let us not fixate on his passing, but on the life he lead, and the hearts he touched. After the prayer, the floor will be open to testimony. Please, bow your heads.

(BLAISE and the MIMES close their eyes and bow their heads. BLAISE snaps her fingers in a seemingly random pattern for a few seconds, which prompts the MIMES to briefly snap their fingers. BLAISE then continues the random pattern, followed by another brief period of snapping from the MIMES. This back-and-forth sequence repeats several times. With a final snap, everyone raises their heads and opens their eyes.)

BLAISE

His soul now belongs to Marceau. May the streets of Paradis be merciful.

MIMES

Amen.



BLAISE

This will now be the time for testimony. If you hold memories in your heart about Brother Pierpont that bring you joy, you may share them with us. Who shall be first?

(BLAISE scans the crowd for hands. DADA looks expectantly at CHELBI who is visibly nervous. A mime raises her hand.)

BLAISE

Come on up, sister.

(BLAISE backs away from the lectern and the mime steps up. She begins to talk but DADA “talks over” her to CHELBI.)

DADA

What happened? I thought you were ready?

CHELBI

I’m still thinking.

DADA

Are you sure you just haven’t come to your senses? Realized why this is a bad idea?

CHELBI

You’re starting to sound like a broken record. When will you realize that I’m not listening?

DADA

Fine. Just know that a leader without confidence is pretty unconvincing.

CHELBI

I have confidence! I just need the right words. It sounds like you haven’t been listening either.

DADA

Plus, are you sure that the timing is right? I mean, this is a funeral, Chelbi. Maybe not the best time to get up on a soapbox.

CHELBI

This is the perfect time. It’s still fresh in everyone’s minds. Everyone is already gathered in one place. The way that I see it, it is now, or it is never.

DADA

We are also surrounded on all sides by LVS monitors! For Marceau’s sake, Blare himself will be standing right behind you!

CHELBI

Even better! It will just help me drive my point. They lord over us in every aspect; we can't even have a funeral without them breathing down our necks. Besides, they'd have no idea what I'm even saying.

DADA

Chelbi, please! You are not some kind of protagonist in an adventure story. You are a real person, and in real life, revolutions aren't romantic or glamorous. They are ugly, and bloody, and the bigger guy always wins!

CHELBI

I'm sorry you feel that way, but I believe there's a chance. Despite everything, I have to take it.

(glancing at the mime at the lectern)

She's almost finished.

(The mime finishes her speech, and everyone raises their hands and shakes them about in a "silent applause." Blaire returns to the lectern.)

BLAISE

Thank you, sister. Is there another whose heart calls upon them to speak of Brother Pierpont?

CHELBI

(raising his hand)

I have something to say.

BLAISE

Come up and tell us, that which brought you joy.

CHELBI

Thank you, Premier. I never knew Gigolo personally, but he and I worked on the same line. Occasionally, I'd come across him in the dining hall or locker room and we'd have some surface-level exchanges. But, from the little I knew him by, he seemed like a standup sort of guy. I remember one day when he let me borrow a pair of boots after I had forgotten mine at home. Gigolo was a respectable, honest man. That is why it appalls me that someone as innocent and hardworking as him can be so easily discarded by LVS like he was nothing. Every day they put us in harm's way, and every day we take it without pause. Tomorrow, they will have gotten away with their heartless, cold oppression of our people for 50 straight years. I say that's 50 years to many!

(BLAISE understands what's happening and attempts to gently remove CHELBI from the lectern to no avail.)

CHELBI

I say that tomorrow shall mark the end of our servitude, that tomorrow we show them our combined might with a revolution!

(There are some mixed murmurs amongst the MIMES.  
BLAISE applies more force to CHELBI, who stubbornly  
refuses to move.)

BLAISE

Chelbi, stop this now! This foolishness doesn't belong here!

CHELBI

Join me and my cause! At the end of the workday tomorrow, as they send us back to our prison of a village, we will strike without warning and without fear!

(BLAISE shoves CHELBI off of the platform with great effort. The MONITORS take notice and close in on the crowd, but BLAISE gestures for them to disengage.)

BLAISE

(to CHELBI)

You are no longer welcome here. Blare will see you out.

(BLAISE gestures to BLARE to remove CHELBI from the area.)

BLARE

(approaching CHELBI)

I don't know what you just went and did, but you ought to respect your elders.

(grabbing CHELBI)

I'm taking you home, come on.

(BLARE exits with a struggling CHELBI into the village.  
BLAISE recomposes herself and motions for the crowd to settle down.)

BLAISE

Is there another?

(beat)

Then we will close the ceremony with the final dressing of the casket.

(BLAISE steps down from the platform. The MIMES begin snapping. BLAISE moves around the casket, miming a box all around it. They then mime the process of unfurling a sheet and draping it over the box. BLAISE snaps and the snapping stops.)

BLAISE  
Marcel!

MIMES  
Marceau!

### **Scene 6 – Laude Voice Solutions Megaphone Factory**

(It is midday. The line is moving at normal speed, but chatter amongst the MIMES is minimal. There is tension as everyone anticipates something might happen very soon. CHELBI remains intently focused on working, defiantly stoic. RILEY, CLAMORFORT, and BLARE enter on the catwalk, and the lever is pulled to stop the assembly line.)

BLARE  
Hey there, everyone. It's about that time, so listen up.

(BLARE steps aside as RILEY comes forward. BLARE eyes CHELBI.)

LAUDE  
Good afternoon, everybody! Today is the ever-so special 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this factory! To celebrate, we told you two days ago that we'd send you out of here six hours early! It is currently three o'clock . . .

(CLAMORFORT stares intently at RILEY, who glances back at him knowingly. RILEY turns back to the MIMES.)

LAUDE  
So, as promised, we are releasing you for the day! Enjoy your extra time off on me, and all of us here at Laude Voice Solutions!

(All of the LVS staff applaud except CLAMORFORT, who is fuming. The MIMES give thumbs-ups, nod, and sign to each other.)

LAUDE  
We'll see you tomorrow at the normal time!

BLARE  
Make sure your station is clean before you go! Have a good one.

(The MIMES slowly make their way out of the factory but CHELBI hangs back, suddenly unsure about making a

scene. DADA exits in a rush. RILEY and BLARE go to exit, but CLAMORFORT angrily confronts RILEY.)

CLAMORFORT

What are you doing? You're letting them leave after the absolute mess that was yesterday? Why? We discussed this; do you not remember?

LAUDE

(adopting the serious tone)

Yes. We did. And it ended in me telling you to know your place. I have the final say in everything that happens, or does not happen, within these factory walls.

CLAMORFORT

But as your secretary and advisor—

LAUDE

Your job is to be my secretary and advise. You cannot and will not give me orders.

CLAMORFORT

The resulting costs of the incident have been significant, they must be punished!

LAUDE

There will be a time for that! But I keep my word. That's just good business. This discussion is over. If you step out of line and confront me again, I'll have much more than just stern words for you, is that clear?

(CLAMORFORT silently seethes. CHELBI notices the ever-shrinking potential audience of MIMES and decides to take advantage of the argument as a distraction. CHELBI quickly grabs a megaphone and climbs up to the catwalk.)

LAUDE

I'm addressing you, Clamorfort! Is that clear?

(CLAMORFORT notices CHELBI making their way to the center of the catwalk and allows a smile to creep on to his face.)

CLAMORFORT

Crystal clear, ma'am.

(CHELBI reaches the center of the catwalk, turns on the megaphone, and prepares to use it. But, between the appalled LVS staff and the venomous glares of the remaining MIMES, he can't bring himself to speak.)

LAUDE

Blare!

BLARE

Got it!

(BLARE swiftly apprehends CHELBI, who puts up no resistance. BLARE addresses the MIMES.)

BLARE

Nothing to see here, folks. Don't go getting any ideas, or you're next! Move along!

(The MIMES exit.)

LAUDE

Now, just what is your problem, zebra?

BLARE

This is the same mime who was causing problems at the funeral, ma'am.

LAUDE

You crashed a funeral for one of your own? No wonder you stood up here by yourself.

CLAMORFORT

They've shown you grace. They've shown you mercy. And your idea is to instigate some sort of riot? Do I dare call it a revolution? You've done nothing but embarrass yourself.

(CHELBI spits on CLAMORFORT.)

CLAMORFORT

(to BLARE)

Take him to the sub-level.

(CLAMORFORT exits.)

LAUDE

I was going to let you go. I was going to let you go.

(RILEY exits.)

BLARE

(taking CHELBI to the exit)

Look, this isn't personal, okay? In fact, I sort of admire the tenacity. You just don't know how to play nice. If you don't play nice, it's my job to take care of it. Now, I hate

to tell you this, but I'm going to have to lock you up for a while. I'm sure our current guest will be excited to have a new face down there. And, by the way . . .

(BLARE takes the megaphone from CHELBI's hand.)

BLARE  
(talking into the megaphone)

The batteries aren't included.

(They exit.)

### **Scene 7 – Dungeon**

(A stairwell opens up into the bleak room. The floor and walls are bare and dark, save for a wall clock. There is one large, barred cell with two cots within. There is a person sleeping underneath a sheet on one of the cots. Across from the cell is a desk and chair. BLARE enters with CHELBI.)

BLARE  
(unlatching the key from his hip, speaking with levity)

Well, here we are. I'm sure it's not as nice as what you've got at home, but to put it frankly? The bossman doesn't see much reason to invest in the guest room.

(unlocking the cell door)

So, try to make yourself comfortable if you can. And, maybe get to know your new friend there. You'll be seeing each other quite a bit, and I'd say it's in your best interest to get along.

(opening the door)

If you will.

(CHELBI enters the cell and sits on the cot.)

BLARE  
(closing and locking the door)

I'll be back soon, so no funny business while I'm gone, alright? Got to go fill out a report on your little stunt. Then I'll come right back, sit in that chair, and watch you like a hawk. What an experience, huh? This room hasn't seen this much excitement in years!

(relatching the key, dropping the levity)

But really though, don't make this worse for yourself. You've screwed up enough as is.

(BLARE exits. CHELBI sits defeated, staring at the floor. He begins to cry before stopping himself. CHELBI suddenly explodes, punching the cot repeatedly before throwing it at the bars of the cell. He begins to cry again,

unhindered this time. The person under the sheet stirs and emerges from his sleep, revealing JEAN.)

JEAN

What the . . ? What are doing? Who are you? Why are you in my cell?

(Without looking back, CHELBI gestures to imply his inability to speak. He puts the cot back in its place and sits.)

JEAN

Oh, I get it. You're a mime! You're not allowed to talk, right?

(CHELBI nods.)

JEAN

Well, for someone with a vow of silence, you know how to make a lot of noise.

(observing CHELBI)

They've thrown you in here permanently?

(CHELBI nods.)

JEAN

Great. I get a new cellmate and still have no one to talk to.

(JEAN considers asking more questions but doesn't.)

JEAN

Just keep it down while I'm sleeping, and we'll get along.

(pulling the sheet over himself)

In case you feel like chatting in an hour or so, I'll be Jean.

(JEAN goes back to sleep. CHELBI recognizes "Jean" as a mime-ish name, and looks back with immense concern and surprise, but is unable to confirm his suspicion. CHELBI sits with anxiousness and confusion. BLARE reenters with a paper and pen.)

BLARE

You didn't have to sit completely still you know, plenty of walking space.

(sitting at the desk)

I'll be filling out the report right here, where I can see you.

(while writing)

Didn't get a chance to talk to John, huh?

(CHELBI shakes his head "no.")



BLARE

Figures. Sleeps just about half the day. That's not to say I don't get it. Believe me: if I were him, I'd be doing the same thing. Not much else to do in here anyway.

(BLARE continues writing. CHELBI falls back into the cot and closes his eyes.)

BLARE

Not a bad idea. This has been draining for both of us, trust me.

(BLARE keeps writing, but the pen runs out of ink.)

BLARE

(shaking the pen and rubbing it against the paper)

C'mon, are you kidding me? They gave me one of the crappy ones? They had a whole box of the ballpoints up there and they give me this . . .

(tosses the pen away, then to CHELBI)

I'll be back, got to get a new pen. Stay put.

(BLARE exits. CHELBI sits up and looks towards JEAN with fear and contemplation. CHELBI uneasily lies down on the cot and attempts to sleep.)

### **Scene 8 – Laudeville**

(It is late into the evening. BLAISE prepares to address a crowd of MIMES on an impromptu pedestal.)

BLAISE

Marcel!

MIMES

Marceau!

BLAISE

Brothers. Sisters. I have called upon you tonight to ask you a question. Look amongst you here, and tell me: what makes you belong? What makes you a true mime like the rest of us? You may have several answers; our white gloves that symbolize peace with our neighbors. Our striped garments that remind us to maintain inner balance. Our facial markings that unite us in humility. You may even say our blessed ability to form something . . .

(pantomiming a sheet of paper, then audibly ripping it in half)

. . . from nothing. While all of these answers may be correct, they are all superficial compared to our most sacred tradition: our dedication to the memory of the Great Marceau through uncompromised, lifelong silence. To even seriously consider breaking

this vow would be an affront to all mimes and even to Marcel himself. Today, in the factory, we witnessed such an affront. An act that appalls me to think of even now. Chelbi, the miscreant who interrupted our funeral only yesterday, attempted to incite a revolution and . . .

(physically sickened at the next words)

. . . use their voice.

(The MIMES become upset and become panicked as they chatter amongst themselves.)

BLAISE

(clapping to regain their attention)

Everyone, settle down, please. By the grace and mercy of Marceau, the fool stayed quiet. But even then, Chelbi spared no other value of our people: peace, balance, unity.

(DADA enters inconspicuously.)

BLAISE

Therefore, I declare, by the power invested in me by the Great Marceau, that this Chelbi is no longer a mime at all! He represents a disgusting blemish on our society and shall not be mentioned by name or by any other context for any reason. We will forget him and this event, and by doing so, preserve the good name of Marcel! He no longer has a place in our community, in our minds, or in our hearts.

(DADA has a strong reaction to the last sentence and becomes noticed by the crowd, who alert BLAISE.)

BLAISE

Dada, the co-conspirator! I see that Marceau has finally given you the courage and strength to appear before us. Do you wish for forgiveness?

DADA

Forgiveness? Premier, with all due respect, you have no idea what you're talking about. I only ever told Chelbi that it was a bad idea!

BLAISE

That name is forbidden, child!

DADA

Apologies, Premier, but why? You can't simply erase someone you don't like! If anything, we should learn from this. That stunt in the factory only happened because "they" were too stubborn and ignorant to prevent themselves from repeating history!

BLAISE

Enough! We will discuss the traitor no further! As their closest friend, you must seek forgiveness to spare yourself from . . .

(realizing what DADA said)  
 . . . “repeating history?” What do you mean by “repeating history?”

DADA

Someone tried to start a revolution in the past but failed. I told “them” that it would turn out the same way, and I was right. I’m sure your familiar with the story?

(The MIMES show confusion, but BLAISE is washed over with coldness and becomes intense.)

BLAISE

I cannot say that I am. Perhaps you can tell me about it when you meet me privately for your Repentance.

(to the MIMES)

Children! This congregation is finished! Repentance is a personal act and must not be conducted with an audience. The events of this day shall never be mentioned again; do not let me hear of your betrayal. Marcel!

MIMES

Marceau!

(The MIMES scatter and exit into the village. BLAISE approaches DADA, who stands with both defiance and fear.)

BLAISE

Answer truthfully, Dada. Where did you hear this story of yours?

DADA

My father kept a journal, Premier. He gave it to me before he died. It was just a short diary entry, so there weren’t too many details.

BLAISE

What details did he share?

DADA

Someone set up a meeting with my dad and the other elders and brought up the idea of a revolution. Everyone there was apparently upset, but nothing came of it. The next day, they must have been talking too loudly or something, because some LVS people showed up and dragged the person away to who-knows-where. That was it.

BLAIRE

Was there a date? A name?

DADA

Yeah, but I don’t remember.

(suspicious)

Why do you ask, Premier? You know this story already, don't you?

BLAISE

Yes, I do. I thought I was the only one.

(threateningly)

I should be the only one. Do you understand, child?

DADA

History is repeating itself, isn't it?

BLAISE

Do you understand?

DADA

Yes.

BLAISE

Then consider yourself repented, Dada. Marcel.

(DADA walks a short distance away but turns back.)

DADA

Marceau.

(DADA exits. BLAISE momentarily unravels but recomposes herself. BLAISE exits with the pedestal.)

### **Scene 9 – Dungeon**

(JEAN and CHELBI lie asleep in the dark. The light switches on and BLARE enters, holding two sacks of breakfast. He kicks the cell door.)

BLARE

Morning! Breakfast!

(JEAN stirs but remains asleep.)

BLARE

(kicking the cell again)

Breakfast! It's already getting cold!

(JEAN wakes up and grabs his breakfast.)

JEAN

Thanks.

BLARE

Sure.

(turning to CHELBI)

Hey, wake up, food's here!

JEAN

(grabbing the other sack)

I'll wake him up.

BLARE

Works for me.

(BLARE scans the room and writes on a notepad. JEAN nonchalantly eyes the key on BLARE's hip.)

JEAN

What's the notepad for?

BLARE

Clamorfort wanted me to do a "survey for structural integrity" since there's a second person in here now. I don't think it makes much sense. Now that there are two of you you'll suddenly be able to break through walls? As if. He insists that it's a necessary precaution, but you know what I think?

(directly to JEAN)

I think he's paranoid.

JEAN

Yeah?

BLARE

(returning to scanning)

Oh yeah. I always thought he was a shifty little guy, but something's gotten into him lately. The last couple of days must have been hard on him, I guess.

(making his last note)

Think that's everything. Don't forget about your pal, huh? I'll be back. Eventually.

(BLARE exits. JEAN sits on his cot and sets the sacks down. He reaches into his pocket and produces a red flower; it is identical to the one seen on the hat of Marcel Marceau's character "Bip the Clown." JEAN affixes the flower to his outfit and holds his hands in front of himself as if holding a ball. He glances at CHELBI and gets up to deliver his breakfast. JEAN shakes CHELBI.)

JEAN

Wake up.

(CHELBI holds his hand up to receive his breakfast.)

JEAN

Wha— How long have you been awake? Have you been up this whole time?

(CHELBI gives a thumbs-up, then opens and closes his hand expectantly.)

JEAN

(stepping back, incensed)

Ah, no. That's not how this is going to work.

(CHELBI lowers his hand and JEAN sets the sack down.)

JEAN

What do you think this is, kid? Some kind of vacation? A temporary inconvenience? You're in jail! We're both in jail, together, and it's going to be that way for the foreseeable future. If you and I are in it for the long haul, I refuse to play the nanny to the whiny, pouty brat!

(CHELBI stands up facing away from JEAN and puts up his hands apologetically)

JEAN

And what is this? Is there something wrong with your face?

(As JEAN speaks the next lines, he walks around CHELBI to get a look at him, but CHELBI continues to turn away.)

JEAN

Show some respect, huh? Look at me! Are you somehow too good to look me in the eye? What is your problem, kid? If you're not going to talk to me, at least let me see your face. For the love of Marceau, just turn around!

(Upon hearing "Marceau," CHELBI goes cold. He turns around slowly until he sees JEAN, at which point he scurries away, partly nauseous, and partly terrified. CHELBI cowers in the corner, eyes locked on JEAN.)

JEAN

Whoa! Get a hold of yourself, kid! I'm not trying hurt you, calm down. Look, I'm a mime, same as you.

(realizing, to himself)

But not quite. Oh no.

(to CHELBI, gently)

Hey, it's okay. Yes, I'm speaking, but nothing bad is going to happen, I promise.

(JEAN's words have the opposite effect and panic CHELBI more. JEAN thinks, then:)

JEAN

(signed methodically)

Sorry. I'm rusty, but I'll sign. Don't be afraid.

(JEAN reaches out to CHELBI. CHELBI hesitates but begins to inch closer to JEAN like a frightened dog would at the vet. CHELBI eventually gets close enough for JEAN to pick him up off of the floor. They sit across from each other on their cots.)

JEAN

(signed)

Your name?

CHELBI

Chelbi.

JEAN

(signed)

Chelbi. My name is Jean. I'm sorry for scaring you.

CHELBI

I don't believe you.

JEAN

(signed)

Why? I am still a mime. We don't hurt each other.

CHELBI

We don't speak either. You're not a mime anymore; you brought a curse on both of us.

JEAN

(signed, getting the hang of it again)

Yes, I am familiar with the rhetoric.

CHELBI

Then you know it's true. You are in jail, after all.

JEAN

(signed)

I assure you; it wasn't a curse that put me here. How about you?

CHELBI

What about me?

JEAN

(signed)

What brought you here?

CHELBI

I don't think it matters.

JEAN

(signed)

I do.

CHELBI

Why?

JEAN

(signed)

You're the second person to ever be locked up in here. That means you probably did what I did. Or worse.

(leaning in)

You tried to be a hero, didn't you?

CHELBI

(beat)

I tried.

JEAN

(signed)

I guess no one learned from the first time. You had to have known it was a bad idea.

CHELBI

I heard plenty of it from Dada. She's an ex-friend of mine.

JEAN

(signed)

I love my people, but those mimes out there are too stubborn for their own good. They'd rather cling to their antiquated traditions than free themselves. LVS knew what they were doing.

CHELBI

So you speak to spite them?



JEAN

(signed)

It started as more of a . . . last-ditch effort. But when I didn't get struck with lightning, I realized something: all this time we've been suffering for nothing. We've kept ourselves here for no other reason than some scary superstition. So, yes. Spite.

(CHELBI turns away from JEAN, then grabs his breakfast. He sits on his cot and eats. JEAN turns away from CHELBI and puts his hands in front of him again. JEAN stares at his hands and drops them with frustration.)

JEAN

Lost it.

(CHELBI reacts)

JEAN

(signed)

Sorry.

(JEAN mumbles to himself and resolves to eat his breakfast.)

### **Scene 10 – The Office of Riley Laude**

(It's midday. RILEY sits at her desk, busily working. An intercom system on the desk buzzes loudly. She holds down the button to respond.)

LAUDE

Go for Laude!

MONITOR (VOICE)

Clamorfort is here to speak with you, ma'am. He says that it's urgent business.

LAUDE

Urgent business?! If it's so urgent, then how come he didn't schedule a meeting?! He has to follow procedures like everyone else! Heck, he put them in place himself!

MONITOR (VOICE)

He says it just came up, ma'am. No way to schedule it ahead of time.

LAUDE

Well, I'm afraid I'm busy right now! Give me thirty minutes!

MONITOR (VOICE)

(hushed)

He looks pretty serious, ma'am. I don't know if it would be a good idea to keep him waiting.

LAUDE

Ha, ha, ha! What are you so afraid of?! I'm the boss, remember? Tell him: he can stand to wait, whatever it is, okay?!

(RILEY waits for a response, but nothing happens.)

LAUDE

Hello?! Hello?! I think something happened with the intercom because I can't hear you!

(RILEY waits, and gets anxious.)

LAUDE

(serious)

Are you okay? Say something. Hello?

(RILEY gives up and goes back to work. There is a knock at the door, which makes RILEY jump.)

LAUDE

Who's that?! Clamorfort?!

CLAMORFORT (VOICE)

Yes, ma'am.

LAUDE

I thought I told you to wait! I'm busy, here!

CLAMORFORT (VOICE)

They gave me the go-ahead, ma'am. There must have been some confusion, what with the malfunctioning intercom and all.

LAUDE

Can you make it quick?!

CLAMORFORT (VOICE)

Yes, ma'am. If I spare you the specific details and tell you only what is necessary, I believe this meeting can be over in a very efficient timeframe.

LAUDE

(giving in)

Alright, come on in! Take a seat and get this over with!

(CLAMORFORT enters with a folder of documents. He takes a seat.)

CLAMORFORT

I wanted to discuss this privately so as not to cause a panic amongst the staff. I have reason to believe that our internal security has been breached.

LAUDE

(serious)

Internal security?

CLAMORFORT

In laymen's terms: We may have been hacked.

LAUDE

What have we lost?

CLAMORFORT

Nothing yet, but an intruder seems to be present on our network.

LAUDE

Okay, so why are you talking to me? We have an IT guy for this kind of thing, don't we?

CLAMORFORT

Yes, ma'am, but they can't do a thing without the administrative passcodes, which you possess. I've come to retrieve them from you on their behalf.

LAUDE

(defensive)

Administrative passcodes? As in, for the bank accounts and databases? That's highly sensitive info. What do they need that for?

CLAMORFORT

(opening the folder)

Well, ma'am, I have a very detailed answer for you. There's quite a lot to explain and a whole lexicon of technical jargon, so if you'd like to hear it—

LAUDE

Just give me the summary.

CLAMORFORT

(pausing to think)

All you need to know is that the breach is in the highest level of the network, and so, IT needs access to the highest level to fix it. The information will be in safe hands; only vital personnel will be allowed to see it.

LAUDE  
(against her better judgement)

Fine. Let me write them down for you.

(RILEY places a sticky note on her desk and jots down the passcodes. Meanwhile, CLAMORFORT sorts through his folder and prepares some documents.)

LAUDE  
(giving the note)

Here. Be very careful with this.

CLAMORFORT  
(pocketing the note)

Thank you very much, ma'am. Now, some additional business.

(CLAMORFORT tosses the documents on to the desk.)

CLAMORFORT  
Have you seen this information yet?

LAUDE  
(scanning the documents)

What is this . . . stock information . . . business articles . . . financial statistics . . . some of this looks pretty, Clamorfort. Is this related to the breach?

CLAMORFORT  
No, ma'am. This is not the work of a hacker. This is the work of a CEO who fails to get their priorities in order.

LAUDE  
(rising)

Clamorfort . . .

CLAMORFORT  
A CEO who allows their laborers to go unchecked, who allows them to make damning mistakes.

LAUDE  
You've already lost my good graces. I've been tolerating you as a professional courtesy, so if you don't want to get fired, I suggest you leave my office and do your job. Now.

(CLAMORFORT casually reaches into his pocket and makes call on his cellphone.)

LAUDE

Are you making a phone call?!

(CLAMORFORT shushes RILEY, who stands stunned.)

CLAMORFORT

(on the phone)

Hello. This is Clamorfort. I have the passcodes; I'll be on my way shortly. Salutations

(hanging up)

Sorry, but it really is urgent. Where was I?

LAUDE

Get out of my office, you're fired!

CLAMORFORT

Right! Your failings as a leader. After the fatal incident on Wednesday, and your subsequent lack of action, I realized that perhaps your judgement and, how shall I say it? "Leadership style?" Are not the best fit for this operation.

(RILEY speaks into the intercom.)

LAUDE

I need security in here! Get Clamorfort out of my office, now!

CLAMORFORT

Your fatal flaw was that you insisted on treating those stripes like they were people. We took their humanity away 50 years ago. What we need is a leader willing to use fear and punishment for optimum results. The tool is only as good as it's artisan, and you are an amateur.

LAUDE

(into the intercom)

I need help! My life is in danger here!

(Hearing no response, RILEY reaches into her desk drawer and pulls out a revolver and points it at CLAMORFORT.)

LAUDE

Get away from me or I'll shoot!

CLAMORFORT

(snickering)

You can't do that. I know you can't.

LAUDE

Then you don't know me at all.

(aiming with more resolve)

Go ahead, make a move, I'll show you what I can't do!

(CLAMORFORT stares down RILEY in silence, a smug smile plastered across his face.)

CLAMORFORT

(moving suddenly)

Boo!

(RILEY fires, but the weapon only produces a metallic click. She drops the gun in disbelief. CLAMORFORT draws a handful of bullets from his pocket and tauntingly shows them off.)

CLAMORFORT

That was the simplest step; you keep your door unlocked. Idiot.

(A group of SPECIALIST MONITORS enter through the door. They flank CLAMORFORT and draw their weapons on RILEY.)

LAUDE

The authorities will see this footage! You're going to rot in prison for this!

CLAMORFORT

(feigning devastation)

Oh . . . no, no, no! If only I had been able to order the deactivation of the surveillance cameras under the guise of a . . . phone call.

(dropping the act)

I'm smarter than you. I'm more industrious than you. And pretty soon, I'll be the only one between us with a pulse. Who would you say sounds more qualified?

LAUDE

How?!

(to the SPECIALISTS)

You work for me, dammit!

(to CLAMORFORT)

This shouldn't be possible! How is this possible?!

CLAMORFORT

The breadth of my duties happen to extend far beyond "being your secretary and advising." I have substantial pull in every relevant sector.

(making the "money gesture" with his fingers)

And plenty of "push" to go with it.

LAUDE

You snake!

CLAMORFORT

Riley, please. It's just good business.

(to the SPECIALISTS)

Fire.

(The SPECIALISTS gun down RILEY LAUDE, killing her. They exit with her body. CLAMORFORT makes another call while snooping around the office)

CLAMORFORT

Hello? Am I speaking with Mr. Racquet?

RACQUET (VOICE)

Um, yes. May I ask who I'm speaking with?

CLAMORFORT

This is Clamorfort.

RACQUET (VOICE)

Ah, hello. Is there something I can help you with?

CLAMORFORT

Yes. I need you to come up to the factory as soon as possible. We want to make some revisions to the contract.

RACQUET (VOICE)

(surprised)

Ah! You do mean, the "Premier Contract," yes?

(CLAMORFORT finds the deed to the factory and pockets it.)

CLAMORFORT

Yes, Mr. Racquet. There has been a shift in policy.

RACQUET (VOICE)

How exciting! I'll make my way over there now. I'll meet you in a short while!

CLAMORFORT

Lovely. You'll find me on the catwalk. Salutations.

(CLAMORFORT hangs up, grabs the gun, and exits, pleased.)

### Scene 11 – Dungeon

(While JEAN sleeps on his cot, CHELBI sits on the end of his as if waiting for something. Footsteps are heard from the stairwell. CHELBI goes to shake JEAN awake. JEAN wakes up, alert.)

JEAN  
(listening)

Perfect. Thanks, Chelbi. Oh!

(signed)

Sorry. I don't mean to, I promise.

(CHELBI waves it off and sits back down. BLARE enters and takes a seat. JEAN looks attentively at the key on his hip once again.)

BLARE  
(scrolling through his phone)

So, how are ya? That breakfast was pretty bad today, huh?

(over his shoulder to CHELBI)

Trust me, it's usually not that crappy. Just take my word for it, okay?

(back to his phone)

I told the cook to make a good first impression for our new guest, but he clearly didn't take that to heart. I mean, what do I know, right? I'm only the Head Monitor. Sometimes I feel like I ought to be the Head Janitor for all the respect and authority I get. The only ones I can count on to listen to me are my monitors. My boys always have my back. And I don't mean those stuck-up "specialists" with their noses up Clamorfort's ass, either. Buncha' tightwads.

(long beat, then looking over his shoulder at JEAN)

You alright? Usually you'd have something to say by now.

(JEAN gestures to CHELBI and says something in sign language.)

BLARE  
Uh, sorry, I . . . don't speak . . . hands. Use your words, John.

(JEAN tries to explain the situation through gesture but gives up.)

BLARE  
Alright, well, that's . . . you're weirding me out now. I'm just going to turn back around.

(BLARE keeps scrolling. He gets a notification on his phone that alarms him. He stands up to leave.)



BLARE

Woah. Uh. I have to go. Right now.

(BLARE hurriedly exits. JEAN and CHELBI briefly look at each other with concern and then return to facing away. JEAN affixes the flower to himself. He sits with his hands in front of him once again and, with intense focus, begins moving them with small, specific movements. As he does this, CHELBI observes. After a short while, JEAN finishes having pantomimed the shape of a key. He holds the key in his hand and inserts it into the cell door's lock. It doesn't quite work. He goes back to his cot, feels over the key analytically, and turns to CHELBI.)

JEAN

(signed)

Wake me up when Blare gets back.

CHELBI

You're going to sleep again? You just got up.

JEAN

(signed)

It helps me memorize it. Locks the shape into my mind.

CHELBI

Memorize what? The shape of what?

JEAN

(signed, with a sigh)

You've noticed the key on Blare's hip, I'm sure. That's our ticket out of here. Obviously, he's not about to hand it to us, so for the past few years I've committed to memorizing it's shape. If I can get it just right, I can create a copy to use on the door. I can feel how close I am, but it's never quite right. So let me sleep, and maybe we can get out of here before the year 2180!

CHELBI

I hate to tell you this, but . . . it's been 2180 for seven months.

JEAN

(to himself)

It's been 30 whole years . . . ?

(signed)

I'm not going to rot in here! I need to make that key!

CHELBI

I want to leave too, but Jean . . . it's impossible. You can't create an object that intricate, no mime can! A simple box can take years to get right, but a key? You're crazy!

JEAN

(signed)

Crazy for a typical mime, maybe.

(pointing to the flower)

But I think you've forgotten who you're taking too!

CHELBI

(puzzled)

What is that supposed to mean?

JEAN

(signed)

Watch yourself. I may be in jail, and I may have broken the most sacred of all mime laws, but this flower means I'm still your Premier!

CHELBI

Premier?!

JEAN

(signed)

Don't sound so shocked, this shouldn't be news to you. I'm sure at some point you had to have questioned why the village had no Premier. They would have told you it was because I was in here. Right?

(beat)

Right?

CHELBI

You were the one Dada was telling me about. The one who tried before and failed.

JEAN

(signed)

What did she say?

CHELBI

She said that . . . you were dead.

(There is a long beat.)

JEAN

(quietly)

Dead?

CHELBI

The first I had ever heard of you was from Dada. She didn't even know your name.

JEAN

How . . . no . . . if I'm not the Premier anymore, then who is?

CHELBI

Her name is Blaise. She's been the Premier for as long as I can remember.

JEAN

Premier Blaise, huh?

(pacing angrily)

Of course. Of course! How was I so stupid to think that she of all people wouldn't steal my title away?!

(simmering down)

But to erase me completely? How could someone do that? I only wanted what was best for my people, and for that they . . . they chose to forget that I existed?

(signed)

Listen to me, Chelbi. This flower is one of a kind. If she doesn't have this and my permission, which she most certainly does not, she's not your Premier. I am.

CHELBI

I thought you didn't like tradition.

JEAN

(signed)

It's not about tradition! It's not about curses or superstitions! It's about honor and respect. I showed nothing but kindness and respect to my people. It's only right that they should return the favor. Not . . . spit on my memory.

(beat)

When we finally get out of here, there's going to be a reckoning.

(Screaming and footsteps are heard barreling down the stairs. There is the sound of a struggle. A SPECIALIST is thrown into the room, followed closely by BLARE who engages him in physical combat. At some point, BLARE becomes pinned onto the cell wall. After the initial shock wears off, JEAN rushes towards BLARE to get the key off of his hip, getting his hands all around it. BLARE is thrown off of the wall before the key can be snagged.)

JEAN

(to CHELBI)

I think I've got it. I think I've got it!

(As the fight continues, JEAN attempts to recreate the key with his new information. JEAN finishes the key and inserts it into the lock. It works, and JEAN and CHELBI exit the cell as BLARE finishes off the SPECIALIST and takes his gun.)

BLARE  
(aiming at JEAN and CHELBI)

Get back in that cell!

(A voice is heard through the SPECIALIST'S hand radio.)

ROMEO (VOICE)  
Echo, this is Romeo, come in. I repeat, this is Romeo, do you read me?

BLARE  
Uh oh. Uh . . .  
(speaking into the hand radio)  
This is Echo, I read you loud and clear Romeo. You are clear for take-off, over.

ROMEO (VOICE)  
Wha— Augh, screw you, Blare!

SPECIALIST (VOICE)  
Romeo, take care of that! Quebec, Sierra, provide backup if needed.

ROMEO, QUEBEC, AND SIERRA (VOICES)  
Sir!

BLARE  
(to JEAN and CHELBI)  
I don't need you hurt. Get back in that cell now! 'Cause I'll tell you now, you aren't going to make it far out there.

JEAN  
Aren't these your guys?

BLARE  
No. These are the tightwads I was talking about. It looks like Clamorfort went off the deep end.

JEAN  
What happened?

BLARE

You know what they say: if it looks like a hostile takeover, and if it sounds like a hostile takeover, chances are . . .

JEAN

It's a hostile takeover?

BLARE

I knew that guy was screwy. For God's sake, they killed Ms. Laude!

(ROMEO enters.)

ROMEO

For Echo, bastard!

(ROMEO fires but is quickly shot dead by BLARE. A stray bullet hits JEAN, who falls down wounded.)

BLARE

John!

(BLARE kneels beside JEAN and does his best to mend the wound. The hand radios crackle to life again.)

QUEBEC (VOICE)

Romeo, this is Quebec. Are you in need of backup? Romeo, come in!

SIERRA (VOICE)

This is Sierra. Romeo is unresponsive. Quebec and I are en route to dungeon.

SPECIALIST (VOICE)

Affirmative.

BLARE

I need something to put pressure on this wound!

(BLARE frantically looks around. JEAN pantomimes snapping a small cloth and folds it neatly. BLARE takes it and applies it.)

BLARE

Perfect! I can't believe this works.

(to CHELBI)

Hey! Uh . . .

JEAN

Chelbi.

BLARE

Shelby! You're going to get shot standing there. Move!

(CHELBI looks between JEAN's crumpled form and the stairwell. He knows they have no chance versus two armed SPECIALISTS. He begins to pantomime the sturdiest box he can around himself.)

BLARE

What are you— Oh, I get it! Alright, but that better not be cardboard!

(BLARE looks through the desk drawer and finds nothing. He flips open his pocketknife in preparation to dig the bullet out of JEAN's body. Meanwhile, CHELBI continues building his box. The SPECIALISTS are heard coming down the stairs.)

BLARE

(to JEAN)

Press as hard as you can on that wound!

(moving behind CHELBI's box)

Here they come!

(QUEBEC and SIERRA enter firing their weapons. To their surprise, the bullets hit the invisible box. BLARE capitalizes on their confusion and shoots them both dead.)

BLARE

Thank God. John!

(BLARE returns to JEAN's side. CHELBI exits through the back of his box to join them. BLARE removes the cloth and takes off JEAN's gloves. He twists them around each other and hands them in JEAN's mouth.)

BLARE

Bite down on this.

(BLARE picks up his pocketknife and digs for the bullet. He gets it free. He reapplies the cloth.)

BLARE

You'll be fine now. Just have to wait this out and then we'll get you some professional attention. We're just going to stay calm and keep this bleeding under control, okay?

JEAN

Chelbi.

CHELBI

Yes?

JEAN

I don't think that either of us are optimists. So I don't have to tell you what we're both thinking, right?

CHELBI

Don't talk like that. Listen to Blaire and you'll be okay.

JEAN

I was so close. For so long I was this close to freedom. Only to end up here. And to think, this would be the end for me; forgotten and alone. But you . . . you made a choice. to try and make a difference. That brought you to me. And now . . . I don't have to die thinking there isn't a hope left for my people.

BLARE

John . . .

CHELBI

Premier . . .

(JEAN affixes the flower to CHELBI's outfit.)

CHELBI

Premier . . . !

JEAN

You didn't already forget what I told you, did you? There's only two things that make you a Premier: that flower, and my say-so.

CHELBI

Jean, I . . . I can't accept this.

JEAN

We only have each other, Chelbi; you're the only one who can.

(A long beat.)

CHELBI

I'm not ready yet. I don't know if I can face them again. I'm . . . I'm terrified.

JEAN

Good. It means you know you're doing the right thing.

(They look intensely at each other, and CHELBI is reinvigorated with determination.)

CHELBI

Marcel.

JEAN

Marceau.

(JEAN falls unconscious. CHELBI freezes. BLARE checks JEAN's pulse.)

BLARE

Still alive, but weak.

(CHELBI stands.)

BLARE

I wouldn't go out there if I were you.

(CHELBI looks at BLARE.)

BLARE

But I'm clearly not. So . . . good luck.

(CHELBI nods, then exits briskly. A voice comes over BLARE's hand radio.)

MONITOR (VOICE)

Blare! Are you alright, sir?

BLARE

Yeah, I'm fine, but I could use a medic down here in the dungeon if you can get one.

MONITOR (VOICE)

I can bring you down a first aid kit, sir, but that's the best we've got on hand.

BLARE

That'll do but be quick about it.



MONITOR (VOICE)

Yes, sir!

BLARE

Is it still bad up there?

MONITOR (VOICE)

There are some stragglers here and there, but it looks like most of them are on their way to the factory floor, sir. All office personnel have been moved to safety.

BLARE

Good. Regroup and head to the floor yourselves. I think there's going to be trouble; take care of it.

MONITOR (VOICE)

Yes, sir!

## **Scene 12 – Laude Voice Solutions Megaphone Factory**

(The factory floor. The MIMES work as usual.  
CLAMORFORT enters on the catwalk and deactivates the line.)

CLAMORFORT

Workers! Your attention, please! I am here to make an announcement of paramount importance, so listen very closely. I am afraid that our most esteemed Riley Laude has been forced to step down. As a result, I will be serving as your new master. As my first order of business, I will be honoring my word by finally giving you your due recompence.

(The SPECIALISTS enter from either side and form up with batons in hand.)

CLAMORFORT

I ask only for your obedience. You have not given it to me, so I will have to teach it to you. This may be your final lesson if you allow it to be. Otherwise, I will be forced to extend my curriculum. Not that it would be any sweat off of my back; I love being an educator.

(to a SPECIALIST)

Are you ready down there?

SPECIALIST

Sir!

CLAMORFORT

Good. Then let the lesson begin!

(The SPECIALISTS surround the MIMES and begin wailing on them and harassing them.)

CLAMORFORT

This pain is not wrought by my hand, but by yours! This is what you have earned as a result of your actions!

(to the SPECIALISTS)

Don't hold back! Give them what they deserve!

(The MIMES take it. They cry in pain, but no cries are heard. DADA does her best to defend herself. She catches sight of BLAISE, whom a couple of MIMES are trying to escort out of the fray. SPECIALISTS block the group's way, and BLAISE is isolated. CLAMORFORT notices.)

CLAMORFORT

I believe that that one is their queen. Make an example of her!

(The SPECIALISTS attack BLAISE. DADA breaks away from her scuffle and hurries to BLAISE's side. DADA steps between BLAISE and her assailants. In a struggle to protect her Premier, DADA punches the SPECIALIST she is holding off. They fall to the ground, having been taken by surprise. The fighting on the floor stops momentarily as the MIMES look at BLAISE and the SPECIALISTS look at CLAMORFORT. BLAISE looks at DADA and then her subjects, and in a spontaneous decision picks up a megaphone and whacks a SPECIALIST over the head with it. This spurs the other MIMES into action as the conflict suddenly becomes two-sided.)

CLAMORFORT

What are you doing?! Don't let the stripes push you around!

(As the combat heats up, the MONITORS enter with guns drawn.)

MONITOR

Drop the weapons!

(The SPECIALIST put the MIMES in front of themselves.)

MONITOR

Alright, then! C'mon guys, let's do this the old-fashioned way!

(The MONITORS holster their guns and enter the battle to assist the MIMES. The tide of the conflict shifts once again against the SPECIALISTS.)

CLAMORFORT

Who let it slip their mind to eliminate these idiots from the equation?! I will be asking for names!

(CLAMORFORT, annoyed, pull out the gun he took from the office. He fumbles around with it trying to load the ammunition; it's obvious that he's never handled a gun before. As he does this, CHELBI enters from the other side of the catwalk. He marvels at the chaos on the floor before his eyes make their way to CLAMORFORT. CHELBI darts for the gun. CLAMORFORT notices, flips the cylinder in, and attempts to fire. CHELBI stops, but CLAMORFORT is physically not strong enough to pull the trigger. CHELBI rips the gun from his hands and reverses points it at him.)

CLAMORFORT

I need help up here, now!

SPECIALIST

Preoccupied, sir!

MONITOR

(seeing CHELBI)

It's the funeral guy!

(Some MIMES look up as well, which makes CHELBI uneasy.)

CLAMORFORT

(to CHELBI)

You don't believe that you're a hero, do you? This is all your fault. They are paying for your mistake! You're as diametrically opposed to be the hero as you possibly can be. No one stood beside you because you were weak. I'm sure that you didn't break out of the sub-level yourself, either. It was that Blare if I had to hazard a guess. You think your admirable? Look down there and tell me if you see one face that does not look at yours without malice.

(CHELBI is demoralized and looks down into the commotion. He catches the gaze of DADA. Time seems to slow. Where there once would have been disapproval and anger, DADA's face displays understanding, and an

appeal for forgiveness. CLAMORFORT grabs onto the gun and wrestles for control of it.)

CLAMORFORT

A partner of yours? I'll put her out of her misery!

(CHELBI and CLAMORFORT hold the revolver in tandem, swaying its aim wildly. DADA stands shocked while the fighting happens around her. CLAMORFORT begins to overpower CHELBI and the end of the barrel settles in the direction of DADA's head. Overcome with emotion and adrenaline, CHELBI taps into a deep part of himself and yells one word:)

CHELBI

(spoken)

No!

(CHELBI pulls the gun upwards with overwhelming force and empties the cylinder. He shoves CLAMORFORT away. Everyone stands motionless, awestruck after witnessing a mime speak. CHELBI drapes himself over the catwalk rail, having just spent a great deal of emotional and mental energy.)

CHELBI

(to CLAMORFORT, spoken)

Contract. Now.

BLAISE

Heretic! I am the Premier; only I can fulfill the contract, and unlike you, I refuse to desecrate the name of Marceau by breaking my silence.

CLAMORFORT

(knowingly)

Well? What did she say?

CHELBI

(presenting the flower, spoken)

It doesn't matter. Because she's wrong.

(BLAISE looks in disbelief. It triggers something in her; guilt and shame attack her at once.)

DADA

(to BLAISE)

What is that? What does that mean?

BLAISE

It means that the universe is far more clever than I am.

(to CHELBI)

Please, tell me: where is Jean?

CHELBI

Walking the streets of Paradis.

BLAISE

(a weight is lifted)

My mind is at ease at last. Thank you, Premier.

(The MIMES are baffled and chatter amongst each other.)

CLAMORFORT

(concerned)

What did she say?

CHELBI

(spoken)

I am the Premier.

CLAMORFORT

(squaring off)

Is that so? Even still, your contract is a long way from here. I estimate you'll be dead long before it arrives.

(RACQUET enters and goes pale at the sight before him.)

RACQUET

Mr. Clamorfort? You had some questions about the contract?

CLAMORFORT

Ah, Racquet. You're earlier than anticipated. Please, allow my guards to escort you to my office whilst I sort out some business here.

RACQUET

I'll . . . come back some other time, then. Goodbye, Mr. Clamorfort.

(RACQUET moves to leave.)

CLAMORFORT

(to the SPECIALISTS)

Grab him!

(The ruckus resumes as before, but both sides now fight over possession of RACQUET. The MIMES become a neutral party and continue watching CHELBI. CHELBI and CLAMORFORT face one another and prepare to fight.)

CLAMORFORT

So it would seem that the dog has teeth, although I—

CHELBI

(spoken)

Shut up!

(CHELBI and CLAMORFORT wrestle each other. As the struggle for RACQUET continues, BLAISE gathers the MIMES.)

BLAISE

Do you all remember the day the speaker pole was installed in the village?

(The MIMES nod.)

BLAISE

Good. Just like that, but on that lawyer over there.

(The MIMES line up. BLAISE pantomimes a long lasso and distributes the rope amongst the line. They get it around RACQUET and pull him from the cluster of bodies. The MIMES quickly exit with RACQUET. With the danger of harming the MIMES out of the way, the MONITORS draw their weapons on the SPECIALISTS, who surrender. CLAMORFORT sees this.)

CLAMORFORT

What am I paying you for?!

(CLAMORFORT gets back to wrestling.)

SPECIALIST

What a train wreck.

SPECIALIST 2

Shut up.

MONITOR

(into hand radio)

Blare? The situation has been dealt with. How are things on your end? Blare? Blare?

(BLARE enters on the catwalk.)

BLARE

(to the MONITORS)

Don't worry, I'm fine. Just wanted to congratulate you all in person.

(to CHELBI)

I'll take this from here.

(CHELBI hands CLAMORFORT off to BLARE, but not before getting in one last blow. BLARE subdues CLAMORFORT and holds him at gunpoint.)

BLARE

Good people died today, Clamorfort. I'll see to it that you get the justice you deserve.

CLAMORFORT

Save it. No one will ever know what happened here today. The surveillance has been disabled this whole time.

BLARE

Hmm. Well, that might be true. But we know. We all know! And it just so happens we have a dungeon right here. No time for renovations now though, so . . . I hope you and your specialist buddies are comfortable with each other.

(The MIMES reenter with RACQUET, who makes his way up onto the catwalk.)

RACQUET

Oh, hello Blare. Could you please tell me what's going on?

BLARE

Good question.

(to CLAMORFORT)

Clamorfort? Mind sharing with the class?

CLAMORFORT

I won't give you so much as a syllable.

BLARE

(to RACQUET)

I'll tell you later, after I get this slimeball feeling a bit more cooperative.

RACQUET

That's fine. It's probably for the best that I'm left unawares. For legal purposes, that is. In the meantime, I was directed up here to speak with a mime?

CHELBI

(spoken)

Me.

(RACQUET is taken aback. He looks between CHELBI and BLARE and sputters confusedly.)

RACQUET

But you . . . you just spoke but . . .

(CHELBI nods and holds out his hand.)

RACQUET

Well . . . um . . . I, uh . . . are you the, um . . .

(BLAISE comes to CHELBI'S side and nods.)

RACQUET

(composing himself)

Well, you seem to have all of the credentials, but the 24-hour period has not allotted yet. I'm afraid I am legally barred from offering your contract to you until tomorrow morning.

BLARE

(to CHELBI)

That'll be just fine, I think. We have a perfect waiting room for these guys downstairs, don't we? You take your people home. We'll clean up.

(to the MONITORS)

You heard me, fellas. To the sub-level!

(The MONITORS drag the SPECIALISTS away, and BLARE takes CLAMORFORT.)

CLAMORFORT

(to BLARE)

Let go of me! I can walk all by myself!

BLARE

(laughing)

Oh, yeah. I know.

(BLARE and the MONITORS exit with their captives.)



RACQUET

I'll see you tomorrow then!

(CHELBI shakes RACQUET'S hand and looks at the MIMES below and smiles.)

### Scene 13 – Laudeville

(It is the next morning. The MIMES have gathered around CHELBI as they wait for the contract to arrive. The air is electric with anticipation and joy.)

CHELBI

It looks like everyone is here.

(spoken)

Marcel!

(The MIMES, still not quite used to hearing CHELBI's voice, react. However, they seem more tentatively accepting of it now.)

MIMES

Marceau!

CHELBI

Good morning, everyone! It's hard for me to describe what I'm feeling right now. We stand here after an amazing victory, yet I can't help but feel a lingering sense of doubt. From you in me. From me in myself. From us to the future. And, it's not unfounded. But I learned something . . .

(holding the flower)

. . . from Jean: being afraid of the future – afraid of change – is okay. It means that there's at least a small part of us that knows we're doing the right thing. A part of us that wants nothing more than to do it, and to do it right.

(reaffixing the flower)

There's a whole world outside of these walls that we've never seen before. I don't know about you, but that terrifies me. But if you'll trust me and come together not as coworkers, or brothers in arms, or even as mimes, but as friends and as family, I don't think there's anything we can't push through! So, let's leave Laudeville in the past where it belongs, and look towards the future!

(The MIMES erupt in "silent applause." CHELBI looks off in anticipation of RACQUET's arrival. When he doesn't show up quite yet, CHELBI is left standing awkwardly. DADA approaches him.)

DADA

You may have misjudged your timing a bit there, Premier!

CHELBI

I really thought I had that down . . .

DADA

Went better in rehearsal?

CHELBI

I was up all night to get it just right. Maybe the nerves got the best of me. Did it sound good at least?

DADA

You're being a worrywart. You're the boss now; the people support you. It is . . . strange to hear you talk, though. You'll have to give them time to adjust to the new status quo, for sure, but I think they're willing to follow where you lead. You're their hero now. Allow yourself to be happy for that. You've earned it.

CHELBI

Have I? I don't feel like it.

(beat)

Jean should be giving the speeches, not me.

DADA

Chelbi?

CHELBI

Yes?

DADA

You have never been more wrong about anything in all of your years on this planet. Don't you dare for a second think that you shouldn't be here. I care about you too much to see you sulking around when you've been gifted so much life to live. Live it, okay?

CHELBI

Thank you.

(BLARE enters with RACQUET. The MIMES all turn their attention back to CHELBI.)

BLARE

Hi, everyone. Before we cut to the chase, just wanted to say:  
(shaking CHELBI's hand)

Yesterday was a wild ride. It was a pleasure. I'm happy for you and your people, and I wish you the best. If John could see you now, he'd be the proudest fella on Earth, I guarantee you. Well, without further ado . . .

(to RACQUET)

Mr. Racquet, the contract please.

RACQUET

Absolutely!

(procuring the contract and a pen)

Premier Chelbi: as the official legal representative of Laude Voice Solutions Inc., I am obligated to offer the opportunity of cancelling this contract to the acting Premier of the people of Laudeville. In doing so, all terms outlined in the aforementioned contract shall be nullified and the people of Laudeville shall reserve the right to cease, prevent, or refuse any and all interaction with Laude Voice Solutions Inc. or its affiliates for the foreseeable future. If you choose to do so, you must sign your name and give verbal confirmation of the cancelation. If not, I will be obligated to offer this opportunity again after a period of 24 hours. What is your choice, Premier?

(CHELBI picks up the pen and signs his name. He pauses to take in the moment. He looks back at the MIMES, and at BLAISE who gives a solemn nod. He looks at BLARE, and finally at RACQUET.)

CHELBI

(spoken, with trepidation, hope, and purpose)

Yes.

(Blackout.)

**End of Play**