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ZOUNDS!

Episode 101
"Pilot"

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Tenth Draft

1 INT. TAVERN - EVENING

1

Two boys down on their luck in their early 20s, Barnabus and Rob, walk into a dimly lit, lively tavern. There is a live band currently on, playing a medieval cover of some popular song. The tavern itself is is Tudor equivalent of a Wetherspoons, full of characters.

BARNABUS

God's blessed mother Rob it's heaving tonight!

ROB

Yeah, with people who can actually afford drinks.

The boys wander through the tavern to find the bar, walking past groups of men a lot older than them, such as builders, men who have just finished their 9-5, and women on a girl's night out. Barnabus waves flirtatiously at the women.

BARNABUS

I love it. It smells like desperation and mead.

A drunken, beefy builder splashes into Rob. Ale runs down his tunic.

ROB

Oi, watch it fool!

The builder turns around.

BUILDER

(Leaning in, squaring up)

What did you say, butter boy?

ROB

(Nervously, laughing)

Erm... your tunic looks 'cool', most fashionable.. sir?

They continue, weaving through chaos, as if they can't find the bar. Suddenly, Rob stops dead.

ROB (cont'd)

Zounds! Barnabus, look at that!

Barnabus stops too, and we see Elizabeth, an attractive 22 year old barmaid, working behind the bar polishing glasses. Right in front of her is a sign saying '2-4-1 on house ale'.

BARNABUS

2-4-1 on ale! Rob we're going hard tonight! Tonight we drink like Dukes!

ROB

What? No. The barmaid. She must be new.

BARNABUS

Wow. She is gorgeous. But she'd sooner wed the plague than look twice at you.

Rob ruffles his hair in preparation to walk over and buy a drink.

ROB

I'm going to ask her on a date. How do I look?

He now has one spring of hair stuck up at the back. Barnabus sees it but ignores it.

BARNABUS

As if she's going to court you, you look like a haystack after a storm.

Rob gives Barnabus a look of confusion.

ROB

Perfect. I've got that rustic charm.

He walks over to the bar. Rob clears his throat, looking at Elizabeth. No answer.

ROB (cont'd)

Hello?

A bar man comes over. He's tall, beefy and bald.

BAR MAN

What can I get for you mate?

Rob looks confused and points towards Elizabeth.

ROB

I wanted to be served by her actually, *mate*.

The bar man scoffs.

BAR MAN

(under his breath)

Yeah you and every other guy here.

(MORE)

BAR MAN (cont'd)
(Shouting)
Lizzie! Pretty boy here needs to be served.

Elizabeth puts down the glass that she was polishing and comes over, looking annoyed. She puts on a fake smile and a customer service voice.

ELIZABETH
Hi guys! What can I get for you?

Rob is speechless, overwhelmed by her beauty.

ROB
(Stuttering)
T-t-two p-pints of a-ale please!

She looks confused.

ELIZABETH
You what?

BARNABUS
He wants two pints of ale. He just thinks you're incredibly attractive.

Rob blushes, and nudges Barnabus.

ELIZABETH
Right. Has he seen his own hair?

Rob pats down his hair, feeling the little bit stuck up. He is embarrassed. Barnabus chuckles.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
That's five pennies then love.

Rob hands over the pennies from his little purse. Elizabeth sees this purse and cringes. She pours the pint of ale whilst Rob just awkwardly stands and looks at her. He fumbles with the pennies.

ELIZABETH (cont'd)
Cute. Is that made of rat?

ROB
Faux rat.

BARNABUS
He's unemployed.

Rob stands on Barnabus' foot, whilst Barnabus looks around the tavern and spots two girls and flirtatiously waves at them.

ROB

So... you from around here?

ELIZABETH

I live here. And work here. And die a little here every night.

She slides the pints over, and the boys grab the glasses.

ROB

Maybe I could take you out one night?
I know this... tavern.

ELIZABETH

You mean *this* tavern?

ROB

Right. Familiar surroundings!

ELIZABETH

Pass.

Elizabeth begins to walk off as Rob gulps his ale in shame. His eyes catch a flier tacked to the wall:

"AUDITIONS TOMORROW AT THE TAVERN - COMEDIC PERFORMERS WANTED."

Rob turns to Barnabus.

ROB

(Pointing to the flier)

Performers! That's me!

BARNABUS

You can't act. Your destiny involves sweeping stables, not stages.

ROB

It's natural talent. She'll see.

(Turning to Elizabeth)

Next time you see me, I'll be *famous*.
You'll be serving me steak and wine.

ELIZABETH

We don't serve steak or wine here.

ROB

You will when I own the place!

Elizabeth scoffs, but decides to give him a chance.

ELIZABETH
How much does it pay?

ROB
Enough to treat you.

Her eyes pick up.

ELIZABETH
I tell you what, come back tomorrow
and maybe we can have a drink.

The boys walk off. Barnabus pats Rob on the back and lifts his tankard.

BARNABUS
To destiny and delusion!

They clink their tankards and drink.

CUT TO:

2 INT. TAVERN WAITING ROOM - DAY

2

Rob and Barnabus are sat, very hungover, towards the back of the room, on two very cheap looking uncomfortable chairs. There are 2 other people in the waiting room, which makes Rob feel more confident that he will get the role. It's very awkwardly silent, with a couple of coughs in the background as the boys begin to take their seats.

ROB
Thanks for coming to support me.

BARNABUS
Need something to take my mind off
the amount of Poratty I drank last
night. The fact that we're even back
here so early just makes me feel
sick. I might even have a go, it
could be a laugh.

ROB
But this is MY thing. Why are you
doing this?

BARNABUS
Who knows, I might get the job!
Actors are hot too, like that Bradus
Pittius guy. Might get loads of
girls.

Rob scoffs and turns away from him to begin practicing his routine. Barnabus turns to another contestant, who is practicing his juggling, but not doing very well at it.

BARNABUS (cont'd)
(To the juggler)
What play is this for again?

JUGGLER
(Practicing his
juggling)
It's jester auditions!

BARNABUS
(Smiling)
Oh nice!

A beat.

BARNABUS (cont'd)
Who's that by again? New Shakepeare?

JUGGLER
Oh good one! You must be a real
comedian! That's what they need here,
a court fool. Someone to make the
Lord laugh.

Barnabus looks worried, and then asks:

BARNABUS
(concerned)
Do women like the jesters?

The juggler laughs.

JUGGLER
Do you *REALLY* think a woman would
like a man who's job it is to make a
fool of himself?

Barnabus turns to Rob hurriedly, and taps him on the shoulder. No response. He taps again rapidly.

BARNABUS
Rob - I think we need to leave.

Rob turns and gives him an annoying look.

ROB
(annoyed)
Actually please shut up you're going
to ruin my routine.

BARNABUS

Rob... it's auditions to be a jester...

ROB

Shit.

BARNABUS

She's gonna laugh at you when you tell her that you're a jester.

ROB

She doesn't need to know what I do as long as I get the money. Plus it's a paid acting gig, it has prestige.

BARNABUS

Prestige? It's a job that's uniform is a hat with bells on it mate.

ROB

I can bring some class to this profession... maybe...

BARNABUS

Sure. You flinched when a pigeon looked at you funny.

Rob sighs, rubbing his temples.

ROB

(sighing)

Can you actually just not talk to me for five minutes?

BARNABUS

Sure.

Barnabus leans back in his chair, and almost falls over. The advisor opens the door, and looks at the five sat in the waiting room.

ADVISOR

You five!

He looks at his parchment and then looks back up.

ADVISOR (cont'd)

The juggler, the dancer, the "comedian" and...

He pauses, and looks at Barnabus.

ADVISOR (cont'd)

You?

Barnabus just looks at him blankly.

ADVISOR (cont'd)

Let's move. The nobleman's patience
is circling the drain.

Barnabus stands, stretches.

ROB

Let's go. How hard can it be to make
one man laugh?

BARNABUS

Extremely. I've met you.

They head over.

CUT TO:

3 INT. TAVERN - DAY

3

The advisor, followed by (in order) Barnabus, Rob, the juggler and the dancer enter a new area of the tavern. It's the complete opposite to what we've just seen previously - it's cold, dry and derelict. At one end there are two thrones, one comically small and one comically big. The room feels very cold, as if no one has laughed there in years. The nobleman, Lord Godfrey, is sitting on the larger throne, looking miserable.

ADVISOR

Wait here. In a line.

The contestants get into a line, with the dancer at the far right and Barnabus at the other end. The advisor takes his seat and pulls out his scroll of parchment.

LORD GODFREY

(to the advisor)

Him. I want him first.

He points to the dancer.

ADVISOR

Very well my liege.

(to the dancer)

You. What is your name and what will
you be doing for us today?

The dancer steps forward.

DANCER
(in a Mr Beast accent)
What's up you guys?! My name's David
and I am an interpretive dancer.

Lord Godfrey rolls his eyes. The advisor is not impressed.

LORD GODFREY
(sighing)
Go on. Impress me. Quickly.

The dancer does his routine, a feverish mix of twirls, hip thrusts and squats. Somewhere, something cracks. The hall fills with the sound of squeaky shoes and heavy breathing.

LORD GODFREY (cont'd)
(under his breath)
This is worse than the plague.

The dancer finishes with a dramatic pose. Silence.

LORD GODFREY (cont'd)
I feel nothing but despair.

He turns to the advisor and makes a beheading gesture with his hand.

ADVISOR
Next!

The juggler steps forward.

ADVISOR (cont'd)
And you are...

JUGGLER
(Nervously)
Hi everyone! I'm Johnathon and I
juggle for the people! For the joy!

He picks up his 3 turnips and starts to juggle them. He instantly drops one, and it rolls towards Lord Godfrey. Lord Godfrey looks at it for a second, and then stamps on it. The juggler runs off in embarrassment.

ADVISOR
Next! Rob of... whatever. The
"comedian."

Rob steps forward, with bravado.

ROB

My lord, I bring you humour! Sharp,
clever, witty!

Lord Godfrey rolls his eyes. The advisor gestures impatiently.

Rob clears his throat.

ROB (cont'd)

Big fan of the throne. Very ergonomic. You ever get pins and needles, just... shift the jewels around.

Silence. No response from either. Crickets even.

ROB (cont'd)

So, bit about me, I'm Rob. Unemployed, single, allergic to success. Basically living the dream... if the dream's wet and smells faintly of goat.

Barnabus tries to hold in a chuckle. Lord Godfrey is still deadpan.

ROB (cont'd)

So I'm living off my parents' monthly allowance. They're farmers. They think I'm doing "something creative." I said, "Yeah, I'm a comedian." They said, "Is that like a jester?" I said, "jester? I hardly know her."

The advisor puts his head in his hands.

ROB (cont'd)

Growing up on a farm you learn real skills. I can milk a cow, fix a fence, herd the sheep. Want to know what I can't do? Get paid for a joke.

ROB (cont'd)

Everyone in the village says, "Good morrow!" even when the morrow's clearly awful. Your roof's collapsed, the rats have unionised, and yet I still say "good morrow, Geoff!" A bit of honesty wouldn't kill us. "Average morrow" works fine.

He goes to start another joke, but is interrupted by the nobleman.

ROB (cont'd)
So about that Henry guy-

LORD GODFREY
Please stop before I get the guards.

ROB
But my lord I was only just starting!

He shoos Rob back into line. Rob looks disappointed, he thought this was the best material he has ever written.

LORD GODFREY
(pointing to
Barnabus, bit fed up)
You. Make it good.

Barnabus steps forward, clears his throat.

BARNABUS
Hi. I'm Barnabus, I'm just here
because I was told there would be
some free food.

The rest of the auditioners laugh.

BARNABUS (cont'd)
(glances at Godfrey)
You're a lord, right? Yeah, cool,
just checking.

More snickers surround Barnabus. The advisor covers his face as is he is laughing.

BARNABUS (cont'd)
I don't know, I don't have any
material. Here goes nothing I guess?

LORD GODFREY
Get on with it before I die of
boredom.

BARNABUS
I present to you: "Man Trapped in a
Box."

He mimes feeling invisible walls around him. Moves tentatively. The walls start closing in. He presses against thin air, grimacing. Barnabus turns a corner, bumps into an imaginary edge. He winces, shakes his hand, then pretends the box shrinks. He crouches lower and lower.

LORD GODFREY
Is he ill?

ADVISOR

Hard to say, my lord. There's
artistry in madness.

Barnabus tries to escape the box. Fails. Starts "pushing"
the wall with all his strength. Sweat beads on his forehead.
He staggers backwards, crashes into a real stool.

BARNABUS

Ah the box! It fights back!

As he gets to stand up, he skids, but tries to play it as a
part of the routine.

At the end of his routine, he goes to do a bow, but then all
of a sudden we hear a massive rip...

His trousers have split. You can see his underwear, which
look suspiciously like a women's underwear would.

BARNABUS (cont'd)

(under his breath)

FUDGE!

He's ruined it. But then, the nobleman lets out a huge roar
of laughter. The advisor can't believe it, he hasn't found
anything this funny in years. Rob and Barnabus give each
other a glance as if they can't quite believe it.

LORD GODFREY

(still laughing)

Oh, marvellous! The fool fought an
invisible box and lost his dignity!
Genius! Sheer, unfiltered idiocy!

ADVISOR

I must admit, it's compelling.
Terrifying, but compelling.

Rob watches, horrified.

ROB

You've got to be kidding me.

LORD GODFREY

You, sir, are hired! My new Court
Fool!

ROB

Him?! You're giving him the job for
losing to thin air?!

LORD GODFREY

He made me laugh. You made me
consider silence as a religion.

Barnabus bows, still clutching his split trousers.

BARNABUS

Thank you, my lord. I'll... patch
myself accordingly.

ROB

Hang on hang on! You're telling me
THAT is the most hilarious thing
you've seen in decades? What about my
perfectly constructed routine?

LORD GODFREY

"Perfectly constructed routine"?
Don't make me laugh anymore! Your
friend here is a natural comedian!

Barnabus gives Rob a shrug.

ROB

But... but we come as a package deal!
Rob and Barnabus we're a comedy duo!

BARNABUS

No we aren't! I'm much better than
him.

LORD GODFREY

Very well. You are both my court
fools.

Rob is overjoyed. Barnabus just nods, bit unsure about what
is actually going on but is still happy.

ROB

Brilliant! How much is our pay, what
contracts do we need to sign and
where's the staff meal?

LORD GODFREY

(laughing)

Clearly I chose the right people for
the job! You guys are hilarious.

ROB

That was a serious question.

LORD GODFREY

Oh! Well you get paid in the *joy* of
making me laugh!

Rob looks dumbfounded.

BARNABUS

Cool!

Rob looks at Barnabus, and grabs him by his tunic.

ROB

We quit.

(under his breath)

They really need to make some labour laws or something.

They leave.

LORD GODFREY

(to the advisor)

They were hilarious. I want them back tomorrow.

ADVISOR

Of course, my liege. Should I bring a spare pair of trousers?

LORD GODFREY

Naturally. For me, in case they return.

CUT TO:

4 EXT. COBBLED STREET - EVENING

4

Rob and Barnabus have just left the audition, and they are walking towards the restaurant. It's Rob and Elizabeth's date tonight, he was expecting to be paid.

BARNABUS

Why did you make us leave? We were employed!

ROB

Employment?! We were unpaid entertainment! He laughed at your pants, Barnabus. That's not art, that's trauma.

BARNABUS

Well, you said you wanted to be an actor. And you acted like you had dignity, that's a start.

Rob scowls.

ROB
Elizabeth doesn't need to know any of
this. She'll think I'm a success.

BARNABUS
So you're lying. Again.

ROB
It's called acting!

BARNABUS
It's called fraud. How are you going
to pay for the date?

ROB
With the joy of making the waiter
laugh of course!

The boys chuckle at Rob's joke. They come to a turn where
Barnabus would go down to go home.

BARNABUS
Right. Good luck man.

ROB
Thanks, I'll need it.

CUT TO:

5 INT. TAVERN - EVENING

5

Elizabeth and Rob are sat at a table for two in the tavern,
lit by candlelight.

ELIZABETH
So, tell me about your new job then.

ROB
Ah yes, my career. I'm now performing
for nobility. Regular gig. High
profile.
(lowers voice)
The Lord laughed so hard he nearly
knighted me.

ELIZABETH
Impressive. What's the pay like?

The waiter arrives, placing down fancy steak plates, before
Rob can answer the question.

WAITER

Enjoy your meal. Our finest cut of cow.

ROB

(to Elizabeth,
trying to impress)

Fun fact: I grew up on a farm. I can tell quality beef from... average beef.

He takes a bite and immediately regrets it.

ROB (CONT'D)

This is... definitely cow. Possibly one I've met.

ELIZABETH

You're adorable when you lie.

ROB

Thanks, I- wait, what?

They continue eating. It's awkward.

ELIZABETH

So when's your next performance?

ROB

Tomorrow. Maybe. Depends if my Lord's in a laughing mood.

ELIZABETH

(smiling)

You must be doing well if you're already performing for nobility.

ROB

Oh, you know... steady climb. Bit of prestige, bit of applause, the occasional thrown object.

ELIZABETH

And you get to call him "my lord"? Sounds... important.

ROB

Well, I don't like to brag, but yes, it's quite an exclusive gig.

ELIZABETH

Exclusive usually means expensive.

ROB
Exactly! Expensive taste, expensive audience. You wouldn't believe what they feed us.

ELIZABETH
Really? What do they feed you?

ROB
Um... Joy?

She raises an eyebrow.

ELIZABETH
Joy?

ROB
Yeah, you know, metaphorically speaking. Like... laughter, happiness, and...
(he realises too late what he's saying)
...no actual food.

ELIZABETH
So you're... volunteering?

ROB
No! No, not volunteering. It's... unpaid professional experience.

ELIZABETH
That's not a thing.

ROB
It is if you say it confidently enough.

A long pause. Elizabeth sips her tankard, unimpressed.

ELIZABETH
And here I thought you'd be the one paying for dinner.

Rob freezes.

ROB
I was going to! I just thought... maybe we split it. For equality.

ELIZABETH

Equality doesn't mean you get a free steak, Rob.

ROB

Not free... discounted through charm.

ELIZABETH

You're charmingly broke, I'll give you that.

WAITER

How was everything for you two tonight?

ROB

That was brilliant! Can we get the bill please?

The waiter takes their plates and leaves.

ELIZABETH

So can you pay for dinner or not.

ROB

Well, no...? Do you mind-

ELIZABETH

You're broke, aren't you.

ROB

Define "broke."

ELIZABETH

Unable to pay for this dinner.

ROB

Then yes, broke. Do you... take installments?

She scoffs, grabs her cloak, and stands.

ELIZABETH

Good luck with your "career," Rob.

She gets up and slaps him. She walks off. The waiter returns with the bill.

WAITER

Will you be paying in shillings or goat sir?

Rob sits there in silence and disappointment. He gets up and runs.

CUT TO:

BLACK

FIN.