

THAT IT ALL MAKES PERFECT

By

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CHARACTERS

10 Performers (5 Musicians, 5 Actors)

MUSICIANS: 5 any gender, any (portable) instrument

ACTORS: 2F, 1M, 2 any gender

MUSICIANS PLAY:

Players 1-5 - 5 of any gender

Chorus

ACTORS PLAY:

The Reader/Anna - Female

White Board Writer - Any gender

Card Players 1-2* - 1M, 1F, 1 of any gender

Chess Player* - Any Gender

*Card Player 2 & Chess Player will double for Mom and Dad

ACTORS** ALSO PLAY:

Technicians 1-4

The Boss

Mom

Dad

Chorus

AND ACTORS** WILL ROTATE TO BECOME:

Him

Her

**Excluding actor playing The Reader/Anna

Note: The cast of characters should be a diverse one, as they will represent a wide variety of California couples. That said, they could also be around the same age, and seem neither old nor young.

Second Note: The card game the card players play should be an version of elaborate slapjack, such as: <https://www.pagat.com/invented/slap.html>

Final Note: For full chess game chess player plays, see Sample Game here: http://www.family-games-treasurehouse.com/sample_chess_game.html

SETTING

An open, empty space; A union hall; various places of the normal everyday; a kitchen; somewhere between living and dying;

All of these settings should be represented as simply as possible, and none of them should seem too real.

TIME

Un-time/every-time

PROLOGUE - A BEGINNING

(The Reader sits, alone. Vast, empty space. Really, nothing. The Reader sits, and waits. There is no sound. Not even breathing.)

(Technicians #1 and #2 enter, come to the reader. They stop next to Reader, and stand on either side of her.)

TECHNICIAN #1

On three then. Ready?
One, two, three.

(The Reader takes a deep breath in. It's a first. Tech #1 checks Reader's vital signs.)

TECHNICIAN #2

Good. Good.
You can let it out now,

(Reader lets out her breath. Also a first.)

TECHNICIAN #1

Good. Good.
Keep it going,

(Big, awkward breaths.)

TECHNICIAN #2

You don't have to work quite so hard.
Try and forget you're doing it.
The motion might feel strange for a while, but you'll get used to it.

(Reader practices breathing naturally. Tech #1 continues checking vital signs.)

TECHNICIAN #1

Good.
Good.

(Technicians #1 and #2 leave. Reader breathes. She is getting a little

better at it.)

(Technicians #3 and #4 enter.)

TECHNICIAN #3

Welcome!

I see you've found your breath?

READER

I think so,

(Speaking and breathing at the same time is weird. She takes a couple of extra breaths to make up for it.)

TECHNICIAN #4

Could you stand for me?

(Reader stands. Technician #4 takes a brief measurement.)

TECHNICIAN #3

Good.

You may sit.

(Reader sits. They take and record a few more seated measurements.)

READER

Where was my breath before I found it?

TECHNICIAN #4

Hm?

READER

You said I'd found my breath. Where did I find it?

TECHNICIAN #3

It was just a figure of speech.

READER

Oh.

(she takes a deep breath)

READER

I couldn't do that before though.

(deep breath)

READER

It had to come from somewhere.
You're sure you don't know where?

TECHNICIAN #4

Well, where were you when you found it?

READER

Right here.

TECHNICIAN #3

Then there you have it!
You found it here.

(Technicians leave.)

(Reader gets up, examines the chair to see if there's a place her breath would have come from inside of it. No luck.)

(Technician #2 enters carrying a heavy scale. Tech #2 sets it down as soon as possible, close to where the entrance to the room was.)

TECHNICIAN #2

Come over here, please.

(Reader does)

TECHNICIAN #2

Step up,

(Reader steps onto the scale. Tech #2 makes adjustments, writes notes, makes more adjustments.)

READER

What are you measuring?

TECHNICIAN #2

This and that.

(Records more measurements, makes an adjustment, records again.)

READER

Do you think my breath could have been hiding in that chair over there?

TECHNICIAN #2

Your breath?

READER

Yes. Someone came in, and I found it. While sitting in that chair.
That's where I was sitting when I found it, and there really aren't very many other places around here that it might have been hiding.
So do you think it was in the chair?
Or somewhere else?
And if it came from somewhere else, how did I happen across it without getting up?
And what will happen if I lose it by accident?

TECHNICIAN #2

Turn around, please.

(She does. Tech makes more adjustments, and write things down.)

READER

Do you know?

TECHNICIAN #2

Know what.

READER

What would happen if I lost my breath.

TECHNICIAN #2

You can't lose it.
Step down.

(reader steps off the scale. Tech picks it up, and start to carry it off.)

READER

Are you absolutely sure I can't lose it?

TECHNICIAN #2

You're asking a lot of questions.

READER

There's a lot I'd like to know.

TECHNICIAN #2

Well it's no use asking me, I'm just a technician.

(tech leaves.)

(Reader goes back to the chair, sits.
Looks under it. Sits. Waits. breathes.)

(She gets an idea, and lays down on the
ground, listening to it. Nothing. She
sits back in the chair again, and
waits.)

(Tech #1 enters with a folder, and
takes out a pamphlet.)

TECHNICIAN #1

Welcome to orientation.

(Reader takes the pamphlet. The moment
she does, everything assembles around
her. All the other techs and chorus
arrive, in a hurry, fully prepared for
orientation.)

(Orientation Begins. The entire next
section is a highly coordinated chaos,
in which there are always at least two
people talking. All techs take parts of
the following lines. It should run more
or less chronologically, but
Technicians overlap so much it goes by
rather quickly. Bolded lines are
suggestions for what might be said in
unison, or otherwise pop out. The
details are entirely up to you.)

TECHNICIANS AND CHORUS

Hello, and welcome.

(opens pamphlet to page 1)

If you open your pamphlets to page 1, you will see the list of topics we will be addressing, including a basic breakdown of the operating structure here, which, if you turn to the last page,

(reader raises her hand)

Please hold all questions until the end

(hand down.)

Some basic ground rules, page 2:

(everyone turns to page 2)

No inter-unit transfers allowed.

All promotions come from within.

If you become interested in moving up, get to know your boss.

Turning to page 6,

(turns to page 6)

I would recommend though that you take a closer look at the tendencies and trends section, especially section B: Religions, Beliefs, and Where they Come From.

(turns to page 10)

Turning to page 10, you can see the breakdown for how the hierarchy of the assignment halls work. It's pretty simple--you'll all leave here today with a starting number, based on your incoming assessment data.

Don't be afraid of taking what sound like unpleasant assignments--**you won't remember it once you come back,** so on the plus side it'll feel like nothing ever happened.

On an unrelated note, do be sure not to skip page 15 when you read this all later

(turns to page 15)

It's a complete, annotated list of actions that will get you **demoted or dismissed. Page 15.**

(checks the time)

Ok.

It's a little early, but we're going to go ahead and stop there.

Good luck.

(They all begin to leave. Reader raises her hand, and stops the last Technician from leaving.)

READER

Excuse me,

TECHNICIAN #2

Yes?

READER

What are the jobs that we'll be doing?

TECHNICIAN #2

It's all in the pamphlet.

(They leave.)

(Reader opens pamphlet, reads.)

PART 1 - THE UNION HALL

(A union hall of sorts. There is a giant white board in front, and a lot of chairs all scattered about. You get the feeling that they used to be in orderly rows, but most of them have been moved into little groupings here and there to better accommodate the card games and conversations happening throughout the room.)

(The Reader sits in a chair reading her pamphlet. A white board writer writes nonstop on a giant whiteboard that should take up as much of the upstage wall as possible. In the seats we have: Two card players setting up to play an elaborate version of slapjack, five musicians starting to work through a new piece, and one chess player playing against him or herself. The room comes to life as naturally as possible.)

(Card Player 1 shuffles)

CARD PLAYER 1

Which rules should we play?

CARD PLAYER 2

How about
same suits, doubles, slap jacks, plus one, minus one.

CARD PLAYER 1

No sandwich?

CARD PLAYER 2

Yeah, okay, sandwich.

CARD PLAYER 1

Allright,

(Card Player 1 deals.)

(Chess player sets up a game from the beginning. Chess player recites)

CHESS PLAYER

We are told with equal enthusiasm that we learn from experience, and also that we are creatures of habit. To reconcile these mutually contradictory claims, we must conclude that the exceptional among us learn from experience, while the rest remain creatures of habit. A case in point: The great Steinitz quickly saw the fallacy of attack for attack's sake, while the mediocre Dufresne contributed over and over again to the making of an immortal game:

King's Gambit Declined!

G.R. Neumann playing white.

J. Dufresne playing black.

Berlin, 1863. A bright, clear morning. The board set, they began.

(Chess players makes the moves as narrated.)

White P-K4, black P-K4.

White P-KB4, Black B-B4.

Very prudent - so far.

(Player 1 stops playing, the others are still going.)

PLAYER 1

Wait wait wait, what are we doing there.

Guys. Guys.

Hey. Stop playing for a sec.

(The Players stop playing.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Ready?

CARD PLAYER 2

Ready.

CARD PLAYER 1

On your mark, get set, go.

(They play the card game slap (see character page for rules). As quickly as possible.)

PLAYER 1

What are we doing there?

PLAYER 2

Where?

PLAYER 1

Measure 18. How long are we holding that.

PLAYER 3

We're playing it as written.

PLAYER 1

I thought we'd decided-

PLAYER 2

No, we're doing it as written.

PLAYER 4

We are?

PLAYER 1

Does anyone have a pencil?

(In this time, Chess player has continued play under his breath. It picks up to full volume whenever the players stop speaking.)

CHESS PLAYER

White Kt-KB3, Black P-Q3

White B-B4, Black Kt-KB3

White Kt-B3, Black O-O

White P-Q3, Black Kt-Kt5?

Serious neglect of his development. By simply playing 6...Kt-B3 he would have had a good game.

(Card players continue to play slap, as quickly as possible. If exclamations arise as a natural part of the game, use them.)

(For a moment, all we hear is card players playing.)

(Player 1 finishes writing on the score.)

PLAYER 1

Okay, let's take it from the pickup to measure 8. Ready?

(they return to playing.)

(Chess player has continued playing the moves below, spoken softly. After a moment of playing, we hear chess at full volume again, wherever that happens to time out.)

CHESSE PLAYER

White R-B1, Black KtxP?

Worse yet; he sees a "combination":If 8 Ktxkt, Q-R5ch etc.

White R-R1!

Naturally: Having the permanent address of Black's King, Neumann is delighted with the gift of th open King's Rook rile.

Black Kt-Kt5

(Chess player stops and studies the board. No more moves yet.)

(After the next slap in the card game, whenever that is,)

CARD PLAYER 1

Ow! Shit,

CARD PLAYER 2

Oh no! Sorry,

CARD PLAYER 1

It's okay, I just caught my nail,

CARD PLAYER 2

I'm sorry,

CARD PLAYER 1

Really, it's fine.

CARD PLAYER 2

Should we take a break?

CARD PLAYER 1

Sure.

(Player 2 stands up, stretches, and starts doing yoga. The other card player joins in. It is highly

coordinated, and clearly something they do all the time.)

CHESS PLAYER

White Q-K2.

(As this happens, the Players go into high gear. They play and play and play. Chess player stretches, gets up, joins the choreographed yoga.)

(The white-board writer, who has been furiously writing this whole time, caps the pen, turns to the group and yells out:)

WHITE-BOARD WRITER

JOB CALL!

(It is instantly quiet, and all attention is at once focused on the white-board writer.)

WHITE-BOARD WRITER

One: to Mary and Antonio Arenas.
Valley Village, California.
First try.
Low income.
History of depression. No drug use. 56% chance of alcohol use.
Eight week assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A2.

CHESS PLAYER

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER
A3 on assignment, A4.

READER
Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER
B1.

CARD PLAYER 1
Pass

WHITE BOARD WRITER
B2.

PLAYER 3
Accept.
(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes B2 next to the Arenas assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 3 puts away his or her instrument, and leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Two: to Abe and Sheila Hardy.
Fresno, California.
Third try.
Low middle income.
History of insomnia. Light drug abuse. 82% chance of alcohol use.
Eighteen month assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1
Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER
A2.

CHESS PLAYER
Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER
A3 on assignment, A4.

READER
Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER
B1.

CARD PLAYER 1
Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and
writes B1 next to the Hardy
assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card player 1 leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Three: to Mandy and Gabriel Reinhardt.
Montecito, California.
First try.
High income.
History of entitlement. Sparse drug abuse. 22% chance
of alcohol use.
Twelve year assignment.
A1.

PLAYER 1
Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and
writes A1 next to the Reinhardt
assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 1 puts away his or her
instrument and leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER
Four: to Jeff and Harmony Choe.
Culver City, California.

Fourth try.
Middle income.
History of diabetes. Rare drug abuse. 0% chance of alcohol use.
Two and a half year assignment.
A1 is assigned,
A2.

CHESS PLAYER

Accept.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes A2 next to the Choe assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Chess Player leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Five: to Emma Fields and John Ackmann
Rancho Cucamonga, California
Second try.
High income.
History of varied mental illnesses. Constant drug abuse. 98% chance of alcohol use.
Fifteen year assignment.
A1, two, and three assigned,
A4

READER

Pass

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1 and two assigned,
B3

PLAYER 2

Pass.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B4

PLAYER 4

Pass.

CARD PLAYER 2

Shit.

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes C1 next to the Ackmann assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Assigned to C1 by elimination. Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card player 2 is pissed off, and leaves)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Six: to Alfred and Lilliana Lee.
Mill Valley, California
Sixth try.
High Middle income.
History of assorted autoimmune disease. High drug abuse. 99.9% chance of alcohol use.
Twelve year assignment.
A one through 3 assigned, A4.

PLAYER 4

Nobody wants this one, right?

(Nobody says otherwise. Player 4 starts to pack up.)

(White board writer uncaps the pen, and writes B4 next to the Lee assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Assigned to B4 by elimination. Thank you. Please-

PLAYER 4

I'm going, I'm going.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Last call for today: Charlotte and Max Ramirez
Watsonville, California
Second try.
Middle income.
History of farsightedness. No drug abuse. 0.7% chance of alcohol use.
Ten year assignment.

A1, two and three assigned,
A4

READER

Pass.

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1 and two assigned,
B3.

PLAYER 2

Accept.

(Writer writes B3 next to the Ramirez
assignment.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Player 2 puts away his or her
instrument, and leaves.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Call over.
Intermittent assignments will be reviewed throughout
the day.

(White board writer begins methodically
erasing the board. Only the Reader and
is left. She studies the empty room.)

(Player 3 enters, and goes back to
playing music right away. The rest of
the band is gone, so it's all tinkering
around instrumentals.)

(The Reader stares. Player notices.)

PLAYER 3

Want to play?

THE READER

I don't know how.

(Player goes back to playing. Reader

watches.)

(Card player 1 returns, sits, shuffles cards. Reader watches. Card player notices.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Want to play?

THE READER

I don't know how,

CARD PLAYER 1

It's easy. I'll teach you.

(The reader goes over to sit with the card player. Card player shuffles, and sets up the game.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Alright. Cards go low to high. Ten, jack, queen, king, ace. Ace is high. Want to shuffle?

READER

Sure.

CARD PLAYER 1

Here.

(Reader takes the cards, card player 1 shows her hold to hold them She shuffles.)

CARD PLAYER 1

Nice. Try it again.

(She tries it again.)

(White-board writer gets some sort of message. Maybe there is a mail slot in the white board or something. Anyway, writer reads it and calls out)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Job just in!

(Player 3 stops tinkering. Reader hands back the cards.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Steven and Mira Mitchell
Nevada City, California
Second try.
Middle income.
History of minor arthritis. Zero drug abuse. 9% chance
of alcohol use.
Two year assignment.
A1, two and three assigned
A4.

READER

Pass.

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Have you ever seen Nevada City?

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Have you ever seen Nevada City, A4?

READER

No,

WHITE BOARD WRITER

It may not sound nice, but there's no better place I
can think of to grow up.
Second try.
Middle income.
History of Minor arthritis. Zero drug abuse. 9% chance
of alcohol use.
Two year assignment.
!
A4.

READER

Pass.

(beat)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

B1?

CARD PLAYER 1

Accept.

WHITE BOARD WRITER

Thank you. Please report immediately.

(Card Player 1 leaves. The Reader picks up the cards, practices shuffling.)

(Another message to Writer is delivered, through the same means as before. It's read. It's important.)

WHITE BOARD WRITER

A4,

READER

Yes?

WHITE BOARD WRITER

The boss would like to see you.

(Everything changes very fast, and everyone and everything moves except for the Reader, who stays in the same place as the space empties around her. There is nothing left except for her, and the one chair she occupies.)

(The Boss enters. The Boss is very short, and rather unexceptional looking. The Boss studies her.)

BOSS

You're new.

READER

Yes, and-

BOSS

This was your first job call?

READER

Yes, and-

BOSS

And you're A4 already! Very Impressive.
The bosses must see great potential in you.

READER

Aren't you the boss?

BOSS

The Boss? God, no.
A boss. Of one very small corner.
But it's a good corner, I think.

.
There were some excellent assignments in the job call
today.
Why didn't you take one?

READER

I want to know what the things are that I won't
remember.

BOSS

Ah.
I see.
Well,

READER

And why won't I remember them?
At orientation they told me not to be afraid of bad
assignments because in the end it will be like nothing
happened, but does that happen with good assignments
too?

BOSS

You ask a lot of questions.

READER

There's a lot I want to know.

BOSS

Even so, it's a habit I wouldn't keep.

READER

Why not?

BOSS

Questions like that will lead you down roads with limited options and dead ends.

READER

Is that bad?

BOSS

It's something I do my best to avoid,

(Boss pulls out a box of slides from a desk, and holds it out to Reader)

BOSS

Take it,

(She takes the box, and looks at the slides.)

READER

What are they?

BOSS

Options.

(Reader pulls one out, looks at it. Squints.)

(The Boss puts a hand on the slide, and holds it up to the light. They look at it.)

BOSS

What do you see?

READER

An apartment.
Someone tying their shoes.
Someone else clipping their fingernails.

BOSS

Option one.

READER

I can't pick somewhere to go from this! It doesn't

tell me anything.

BOSS

Then you aren't looking hard enough.

(Reader looks harder.)

READER

They're still not doing anything,

BOSS

Then pick a different one. There are a lot of options. You can sit in here, take your time, and look through all these on your own.

Pick one that seems nice, all right?

.
Okay.

(The Boss pats The Reader on the back, and begins to leave.)

READER

Wait! Do the parents know how long our assignment are too?

BOSS

No,

READER

Shouldn't they be told?

BOSS

Remember what I told you about questions?

READER

Yes, but-

BOSS

Pick a job, and I'll pretend you never asked any.

(The boss leaves. The Reader picks up a card, and holds it up to the light.)

PART 2 - MOMENTS

(Another part of the stage comes to life as the card is held up. It's like a window into a miniature moment of a life. We all watch it together*.)

HELLO HUG (#1: TIM/WILEY)

(He waits for her. And waits. And waits.)

(She arrives, but he doesn't see yet. She taps him on the shoulder, he turns around. They hug. And hug. And hug.)

(The Reader puts the card down, and moves to the next card in the pile. It is held up, and another part of the space comes to life.)

(This will happen over and over and over, as the Reader takes a look at each card in the pile. There are fewer cards than moments, so The Reader will come back to cards and see a new moment from time to time. She thinks this will help her decide. It doesn't. There's always another card to look at, again and again and again.)

(Though all of these moments are played as a Him and a Her, the pairings should be a rotation of all available actors, regardless of gender.)

(Also, as a general note, all of these moments should feel as purely normal as possible.)

#2: Beer (Marilet/Sarah)

(Him and Her sitting on a front stoop
in a city. It is warm out. They each
hold a bottle of good beer. They also
drink it.)

(They drink and watch the world.)

(Drink and watch it.)

(He finishes his, draining the last
bit. Stands.)

HIM

I have to piss.

HER

Can you grab me another while you're up?

HIM

Sure.

(He leaves. The world goes by. She
watches it.)

(She drinks and watches the world.)

(Drinks and watches it.)

(She finishes her beer, draining the
last bit.)

(He comes back, with two new beers
already opened. He hands her one.)

HER

Thanks.

(He sits. They drink.)

[end]

#3: bad milk (tim/marilet)

(She sits, drinking a hot beverage from a mug. He holds a milk bottle. He is smelling it. He swishes it around, and smells it again. Another sniff.)

(He brings the jug to where she sits)

HIM

Does this smell bad to you?

(He holds it out. She sniffs)

HER

No.

(He sniffs it again)

HIM

Are you sure?

(Holds it out. She sniffs.)

HER

It smells fine.

[end]

#4: Sherlock 1 (Wiley/Sarah)

(Him and Her lying in bed. She is reading him a story. Some Sherlock Holmes.)

HER

"I owe you an apology," he said, raising his golden prince-nez to his eyes. "I trust that I am not intruding. I fear that I have brought some traces of the storm and rain into your snug chamber."

"Give me your coat and umbrella," said Holmes. "They may rest here on the hook and will be dry presently. You have come from the south-west I see."

"Yes, from Horsham."

"The clay and chalk mixture which I see upon your toe caps is quite distinctive."