

THE WORLD'S GREATEST ACTRESS  
By Ben Gillman

EXT. A FILM SET - A COFFEE SHOP - DAY

A director - PETE - rushes around and gathers up his team.

PETE

Guys, this is it. Elaine Portubois will be here any second. I don't need to tell you how big of a deal this is. Just having an actress of her caliber doing two lines brings our movie to another level.

CLYDE - the cameraman - raises his hand.

PETE (CONT'D)

Yes, Clyde, what is it?

CLYDE

Hey, dude, I hate to bring this up but, you know, I'm like a total professional, so I have to ask-

PETE

Can you get to the point, Clyde?

CLYDE

Do you think she can do the role? I've never actually heard her use an accent before. Even when she was on British Masterpiece Theatre.

PETE

Are you crazy?! She's one of the greatest actresses alive! Now, shut up! Here she comes!

ELAINE PORTUBOIS enters. Glides on-stage is more like it. She's ethereal, magical, pure class personified.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

Hello. Am I late? I'm here to make a motion picture.

PETE

Miss Portubois! It is a pleasure! I can't thank you enough. I don't want to waste any of your time, so let me introduce you to the other actress. This is Kate.

KATE

Wow, wow, wow...

CLYDE

Hey! 'Sup, I'm Clyde! I work the picture box. Film catcher. The camera. I'm a total professional.

PETE

Shut up!

Pete turns back to Elaine Portubois.

PETE (CONT'D)

Now, have you had a chance to look over the lines?

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

Oh my, no! That would steal the spontaneity. And spontaneity is life.

KATE

Wow!

PETE

Absolutely! Okay, so essentially our main characters are about to lose their coffee shop. Suddenly, you walk in. The famed British heiress. You say, "Hello. I'll have a cup of tea." She hands you the tea. And you give her the tip. Which is a check for five million pounds.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

Pounds! I love the British charm!

PETE

And it makes you the hero of the movie really. Then you say, "Good-bye." And you exit. Two lines. Easy as that.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

Absolutely thrilling. Why don't we get to it? As the late Cecille B. DeMille used to say, "Roll film."

Elaine Portubois moves off stage.

PETE  
 Isn't she amazing? Ready to go,  
 just like that. Alright,  
 everyone... Ready and ACTION!

Elaine Portubois enters. She walks up to the counter.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
 (in a terrible british  
 accent)  
 'ello, guv'nor! Can I 'ave a spot  
 of tea?!

Kate hands her the tea.

Elaine Portubois puts the check into the bucket.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS (CONT'D)  
 Ta-ta, m'lady!

And she shuffles out.

PETE  
 CUT!

Elaine reenters.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
 Well, there you have it. Acting!  
 It's been my pleasure to help, and  
 now I suppose I'll be on my way.

PETE  
 Uh...

CLYDE  
 Wait, dude, we're going to have to  
 film that again.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
 Whatever for?

PETE  
 Uh... Kate ruined the take!

KATE  
 I did?!

PETE  
 I think she was intimidated by the  
 power of your performance.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
 Oh dear. It does happen.

PETE

So maybe just one more take. And just do a simple British accent. "Hello, I'll have a cup of tea." Drop the tip. "Good-bye." Simple. Elegant. Done. So as not to overwhelm, Kate.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

May I make a suggestion?

PETE

Of course! You're Elaine Portubois!

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

My instinct tells me the heiress should be Irish. I do a divine Irish.

PETE

Who am I to argue with your brilliance? Let's do that.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

Roll film!

Elaine exits.

CLYDE

It's gotta be better than that British accent.

PETE

Shut up! ACTION!

Elaine enters.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

(in an Irish accent)

Top 'o the morning, to ya. May I have a pot of tea to go with me pot of gold?

Kate gives the tea. Elaine gives the tip.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS (CONT'D)

You'll never catch me Lucky Charms!

And she jigs off stage.

PETE

CUT!

Elaine reenters.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
How was that?

PETE  
Um... Actually, Clyde's framing was off. He screwed up that shot...

CLYDE  
Dude! I'm like a total professional!

PETE  
Shut up! So let's just get one more. Plain British.  
(he acts it as he demonstrates)  
"Hello, I'll have a cup of tea."  
"Good-bye."

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
Worry not. I have just had a stroke of inspiration. Roll film!

Elaine leaves stage.

PETE  
Action...

Elaine enters.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
(an Australian accent)  
G'day, mate! Gimme a tea and a beer and throw a shrimp on the barbie!

Kate gives her the tea. Elaine leaves the tip.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS (CONT'D)  
Oh no! A dingo ate my baby!

And Elaine races off-stage.

PETE  
CUT!

Elaine reenters.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS  
I really felt like that was the one. I've worked with many wealthy Australians. Nicole Kidman, Hugh Jackman, Dame Edna. Lovely people.

PETE

Uh... Yeah, yeah... That was great.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

Well, I do need to be on my way,  
but that should give you something  
marvelous to work with.

PETE

...marvelous...

Everyone looks miserable as Elaine turns to leave.

Suddenly, she stops.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS

You know, after a command  
performance like that I am a bit  
parched.

She returns to the counter on the set.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS (CONT'D)

(in a perfect accent)

Hello. May I have a cup of tea?

She takes the tea. Stops and says.

ELAINE PORTUBOIS (CONT'D)

Good-bye.

Then Elaine Portubois exits.

PETE

Oh my god! That was it! But we  
weren't filming....

CLYDE

Who're you talking to? I'm like a  
total professional. I got it!

Everyone cheers! And Hi-Fives! And we're...

OUT