

(Printed with an unregistered version of Fade In)

FOCUS: A ZOOM PLAY

Written by

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

(NOTE: All roles are and may be played by any ethnicity)

SABINE: 30s. Female or non-binary. Executive at Petras. The peppy one. Dyed hair. Wears a suit and tie.

MATTIAS: 30s. Male or non-binary. Executive at Petras. The snarky one. Bleached hair. Wears a suit and tie.

PHOEBE: Mid to late 20s. Female or non-binary. Plant Mom. Either just did some yoga or is a really high-functioning stoner. It's difficult to tell.

EZRA: Mid to late 20s. Male or non-binary. Hasn't killed an insect in 14 years. Either a hipster or a homeless person. It's difficult to tell.

TROUT: Mid to late 20s. Male or non-binary. Trout is from Florida. It is not difficult to tell.

SERRA: Mid to late 20s. Female or non-binary. Having a rough 7 months. It is not difficult to tell.

SETTING:

Zoom.

TIME:

2 PM.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 1.

The boundless void of a Zoom Meeting waiting for its participants.

SABINE joins the Meeting, their square appearing on the screen.

They futz a little with their audio settings.

Then, a muffled thump from somewhere else in the room off-screen catches their attention.

SABINE stands and exits frame.

Silence.

Perhaps some noise as SABINE messes with something off-screen.

MATTIAS joins the Meeting, their square appearing on the screen.

They look at SABINE'S empty window.

Hallo?
Hallooooo?
Mattias?
Are you here?
Yes!
(Coming back into frame)
Yes, I am. Sorry. I had to fix the ottoman.
Oh, that's right, you can afford ottomans.
What?

MATTIAS

SABINE (O.S.)

MATTIAS

SABINE (O.S.)

MATTIAS

SABINE

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 2.

MATTIAS

Nothing guten Tag!

SABINE

Guten Tag, Mattias!

MATTIAS

It's good to see you again.

SABINE

You too! Are you enjoying the sunshine?

MATTIAS

No.

Beat.

SABINE

Well, that's great! I think I'm all set on my end.

MATTIAS

Me too.

SABINE

Perfect! So then, we just wait for everyone to join the lobby, it looks like.

MATTIAS

Okay.

They wait.

They literally just wait.

They don't really even move.

They just stare at their screens.

SABINE

I'm really excited.

MATTIAS

Me too.

SABINE

I think this is the one.

MATTIAS

Maybe.

They wait more.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 3.

Sabine? MATTIAS

Yes? SABINE

Is there anyone in the lobby? MATTIAS

SABINE looks.

No. SABINE

They wait more.

Another thump off SABINE'S screen.

One moment. SABINE

SABINE stands and exits frame once again.

MATTIAS waits.

A cacophony of sounds off-screen of SABINE'S square: Banging, muffled groans, moving furniture, duct tape, some other sounds that don't make much sense but probably would if we had more context.

MATTIAS waits.

They grab a small bag or box of food from somewhere and eat a little.

Eventually, the noises stop and SABINE returns to their seat, re-entering frame.

Phew! Sorry about that. SABINE

That's all right. MATTIAS

We should be okay now. SABINE

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 4.

Great.

MATTIAS

They wait more.

Mattias!

SABINE

What?

MATTIAS

Someone's in the lobby! Put away your nibbles.

SABINE

MATTIAS puts away their food.

Okay. Ready?

SABINE

Ready enough.

MATTIAS

Okay!

SABINE

SABINE clicks a button and after a moment, PHOEBE and EZRA join the Meeting, their squares appearing on the screen.

NOTE: EZRA is in a somewhat public space. If other people are not in the background of their square, it is implied they are not far off.

Hello!

SABINE

Hallo!

MATTIAS

Hi.

PHOEBE
(Waving)

Hello, everyone.

EZRA

Is this background noise going to disturb anyone?

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 5.

SABINE
Oh! You are in a public place.

EZRA
Is that a problem?

SABINE and MATTIAS freeze.

Uhhhhhhhhh.

It might be.

SABINE
Probably not.

MATTIAS
Really?

EZRA
Cool. I can mute myself if we need, just let me know.

SABINE
Will do!

PHOEBE
Is there anyone else coming?

SABINE
Yes! We are waiting on two more.

And it looks like one of them just joined the lobby.

SABINE clicks again and after a moment, TROUT joins the meeting, their square appearing on the screen.

TROUT has beer.

TROUT
Whaddup whaddup?

EVERYONE
[Ad-libbed pleasantries].

TROUT
This is the focus thing, yeah?

SABINE
Yes! Welcome.

TROUT
Trout.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 6.

SABINE
Sorry?

TROUT
Trout.

Beat.

PHOEBE
Like the fish?

MATTIAS
I think that's their name.

SABINE
Yes! No, we were expecting a "Trout."

EZRA
Not a bass?

Beat.

TROUT
Yo, what?

EZRA
I was just making a joke.

TROUT
What about my name is funny, man?

EZRA
Nothing, I--

SABINE
Haha, laughter. So, we are just waiting on one more before we begin. We could probably go ahead and do the icebreaker while we wait. Mattias? What does everybody think?

TROUT
Yeah, I'll break some ice.

PHOEBE
I don't mind either way.

EZRA
Yes. Anything's fine.

MATTIAS
I hate icebreakers.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 7.

SABINE

Great! Well, I'll start. Sorry if I'm a little nervous. HAHAHAHA! Why don't we do, um, your name, your pronouns, where you are calling in from, and...um...how about something that no one else knows about you?

MATTIAS

Ugh.

TROUT

Deep.

SABINE

So, my name is Sabine. I use [Actor's pronouns] pronouns and I am the Creative Director here at Petras. I am coming to you from the greatest city in the world, Pittsburgh. And, um...let's see...I spent my mid to late 20s as a latex maid in Rasputin's castle.

EVERYONE

What? [or other ad-libbed reactions to SABINE'S icebreaker].

SABINE

Mattias?

MATTIAS

Hang on, I feel everyone would appreciate it if we backed up for a moment.

EZRA

Did you say latex maid?

PHOEBE

And Rasputin?

SABINE

Well, yes. I don't think we need to get into specifics.

MATTIAS

And yet, again, I feel everyone here needs just a little bit more.

TROUT

Not really. I mean, it's pretty clear to me.

Beat.

SABINE

Thank you, Trout.

Mattias. It's your turn.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 8.

MATTIAS

Right. Great. Um, my name is Mattias. [Actor's pronouns] pronouns. I work with Sabine in the Creative Department.

(To SABINE, unable to
let it go)

But was it like a Sugar Daddy thing? I mean, how did the castle come into play?

SABINE

Okay, maybe I shouldn't have said it. If we're going to make a big deal about it--

MATTIAS

I just want to know what *it* is.

SABINE

What else does it sound like? Everything was consensual.

EVERYONE

[Everyone contributes ad-libs to the topic].

SABINE

I got paid very well!

PHOEBE

It's okay! It's okay. I'm sure if any of us have questions we can just google it and how to apply later. Right?

SABINE

Mattias?

MATTIAS

...

Fair enough. Um...[actor's pronouns] pronouns. I am coming to you from my parent's basement in the state of Florida.

TROUT

Word, really?

MATTIAS

Several words, yes.

TROUT

I'm from Florida.

MATTIAS

I am surprised.

TROUT

We should hang out, Mattias.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 9.

MATTIAS

...

Why?

TROUT

Beer. Babes. Booze. Babes.

MATTIAS

Cool. I will message you electronically. Moving on now. I have never seen *Mean Girls*.

Beat.

TROUT

Bro.

MATTIAS

What?

PHOEBE

Why would you admit that?

EZRA

That's disgusting.

MATTIAS

I'm sorry, what is everyone's fascination with angry women?

SABINE

It's just not a very exciting secret, Mattias.

MATTIAS

You know, I think yours was a little too exciting.

PHOEBE

Should I just go?

SABINE

I think that's a great idea.

MATTIAS

Me too.

TROUT

Me three.

MATTIAS

Great, so we're all in agreement.

EZRA

Sorry, you guys work, for like, a real company, right?

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 10.

SABINE and MATTIAS freeze.

Uhhhhhhhhh.

SABINE

Yes!

MATTIAS

Totally.

SABINE

100% real.

MATTIAS

We just like to keep it really informal, you know?

SABINE

Super informal. We're not like corporate suits, you know?

MATTIAS

We're hip.

Beat.

SABINE

Phoebe! Your turn.

PHOEBE

Hey, everyone. My name is Phoebe Larson. [Actor's pronouns] pronouns. I live in LA. West Coast represent. Um...

I'm pretty open, usually...uh...

I watched my uncle die.

Last week. I pulled the plug.

No one else in the room wanted to do it, so...I had to volunteer.

It was for the best. He was in so much pain.

But I saw the life fade from his eyes as his soul left his body.

It was just a really grounding experience, you know? Actually seeing someone leave this plane.

It was a trip.

Who's next?

Beat.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 11.

*No one is able to say a word,
let alone follow that sudden
turn of conversation.*

EZRA will try.

EZRA

Um...I'm Ezra. I'm from Austin, Texas.

Uh, [Actor's pronouns], sorry. I, um...

Uhhh...

PHOEBE

It's okay, let it out.

TROUT

Yeah, bro.

EZRA

This is the strangest Zoom Meeting I've ever had.

TROUT

Word.

SABINE

It is beautiful.

TROUT

Okay! Whaddup? This is your boy, Trout. [Actor's pronouns], son, cause Trout respects all communities! I am from the real greatest city in the world, Florida.

(To SABINE)

Friendly shade, girlfriend.

SABINE

Oh ho ho!

TROUT

Like Phoebe, I am somewhat open, and it is difficult to think of a fun secret that other parties were not privy to.

SABINE

Oh, that's fine, just pick your favorite one.

TROUT

It's a tie between the time I wrestled an alligator at Taco Bell and the time Rich George ate his weight in nickels.

SABINE

Oh, that's fun!

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 12.

EZRA
Wouldn't you die from that?

TROUT
Yeah. He did.

PHOEBE
Let it out.

TROUT
(Raising their beer,
perhaps pouring some
out)
Peace, Rich George.

MATTIAS
That is touching. Are we done with the icebreakers now?

SABINE
Well, we are still waiting on our last participant, but I
don't see them in the lobby.

MATTIAS
We should probably get started. We don't want to keep the
people who showed up on time waiting.

SABINE
It would be best if everyone were here before we started. We
don't want to explain everything again.

MATTIAS
True, but--

*Again, another thump off
SABINE'S screen.*

SABINE and MATTIAS freeze.

EZRA
What was that?

SABINE
(Getting up and
leaving frame)
One moment!

MATTIAS
Mute yourself!

*SABINE stops, mutes herself,
and leaves frame.*

Beat.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 13.

MATTIAS

(Filling the space)

So, Ezra. What do you do?

EZRA

I'm currently between opportunities.

MATTIAS

Ok, ja, that tracks.

Beat.

TROUT

Yo, Matty, Sabine okay?

MATTIAS

I am absolutely positively sure that she is fine.

SABINE re-enters frame, their upper body and face somewhat spattered with a substance that, despite the visual limitations of Zoom, looks very much like blood.

They begin talking and gesticulating.

But they are muted.

MATTIAS

Ohhhhhhhh. You're back. You're muted.

Sabine.

SABINE continues.

MATTIAS

Sabine.

Sabine, you're muted.

PHOEBE

We can't hear you.

EZRA

Is that blood?

SABINE realizes they're muted and unmutes herself.

SABINE

Phew! Sorry about that.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 14.

EZRA

Are you okay?

SABINE

I am absolutely positively fine, why do you ask?

EZRA

Cause that looks like blood.

PHOEBE

It does.

SABINE

(Looking at the blood)

Oh.

No. This is ketchup. From a hot dog.

TROUT

Oh, word.

SABINE

Hey, look! Serra's in the lobby! The gang's all here!

SABINE clicks again and after a moment, SERRA joins the meeting, their square appearing on the screen.

SERRA

Oh my god I'm so sorry I'm late.

SABINE

Not at all! Welcome, Serra, we're so glad you are here.

SERRA

Is that blood?

TROUT

It's ketchup.

Beat.

SERRA

We get paid for this, right?

SABINE

Yes!

SERRA

Fuck it. What'd I miss?

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 15.

SABINE
Well, we were just doing the icebreakers.

MATTIAS
What's your name?

SERRA
Serra.

SABINE
Mattias.

MATTIAS
Pronouns?

SERRA
[Actor's pronouns].

MATTIAS
Where are you from?

SERRA
Schenectady.

MATTIAS
What's something no one knows about you?

SERRA
I'm \$287,000 in debt.

Beat.

MATTIAS
Ja, that's basically all you missed.

TROUT
And Sabine was a latex maid in Rasputin's castle.

PHOEBE
And I killed my uncle.

MATTIAS
Ja, that's basically all you missed.

SABINE
Let's go ahead and get started, right?

EZRA
Hang on--

EVERYONE ELSE
[Ad-libbed agreement].

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 16.

SABINE

Great! That sounds good. So, everyone should have received their package from Petras through the United States Postal Service, correct?

EVERYONE

[Ad-libbed agreement].

SABINE

Did anyone not receive their Petras package from the United States Postal Service?

Great. Let's get them out.

The four testers each grab a small, rectangular cardboard box somewhere from their location (if they haven't been visible on screen already).

MATTIAS grabs a notebook.

SABINE

Okay. You may open them now. But do not open what is inside.

The four testers open their boxes.

Each of them eventually unwraps the same small wooden/ceramic box/container.

They are all identical.

SABINE

This is the product we will be asking you questions about today. It is our and everyone at Petras' pleasure, to show you "Glubthar's Fun Box!"

TROUT

"What what's what what?"

SABINE

"Glubthar's Fun Box!"

EZRA

Who is "Glubthar?"

SERRA

What's a "Fun Box?"

PHOEBE

Oh my god, is there a vibrator in here?

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 17.

SABINE

What? No.

MATTIAS

If only.

TROUT

(Because of course
TROUT has already
opened theirs)

There's nothing in here.

SABINE

Oh! You opened it. Even though I said not to.

TROUT

Oh, yeah, sorry.

SABINE

That's okay. We'll just skip ahead, I guess. Everyone open
your "Fun Boxes."

*The others open their "Fun
Boxes."*

They are also empty.

PHOEBE

Is everyone's empty?

EZRA

Yeah.

SABINE

Are you sure?

TROUT

Yeah. There's nothing in these, bro.

SABINE

Oh, but there is. It just so happens to be a vapor invisible
to the naked eye.

TROUT

So what makes it fun?

SABINE

Well, that depends.

How do you feel, Trout?

Beat.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 18.

EVERYONE considers.

How do they feel?

Woah. EZRA

Woah. TROUT

I feel...lightheaded.

Yeah. EZRA

I feel like I'm high.

Are there drugs in this? PHOEBE

Not the kind you mean. MATTIAS

(Adjusting their
notebook)

Question 1A: Are you feeling any negative effects or emotions?

I feel like I'm floating in a bowl of whipped cream. EZRA

Uh huh, okay. Anyone else? MATTIAS
(Taking notes)

Wait. A pool of whipped cream. A pool in an ocean. A pool of whipped cream in an ocean of regular cream. EZRA

No one has negative emotions? MATTIAS

I hear voices in my head. TROUT

Oh. What do they say? MATTIAS

Beat.

TROUT doesn't answer.

We'll, uh...come back around. SABINE

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 19.

PHOEBE

I'm hungry.

MATTIAS

Oh, perfect! That's Question 2: Is anyone else hungry?

PHOEBE

I am.

MATTIAS

Yes. I have that.

PHOEBE

I'm very hungry. I need to eat. I need to feast.

PHOEBE looks around, grabs a nearby plant, and begins eating some of the dirt.

EZRA

Woah.

PHOEBE

(Their mouth full)

Oh my god.

MATTIAS

(Taking notes)

I see.

PHOEBE

(Their mouth still full)

Oh my god, this is so good.

MATTIAS takes more notes as PHOEBE continues to eat.

SERRA

(Re: PHOEBE)

Is that...supposed to be happening?

SABINE

Uh, define supposed to?

SERRA

Is that a normal reaction?

MATTIAS

It's not not normal. More importantly, how are you feeling? Are you feeling anything?

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 20.

SERRA

No.

Which is kind of why everyone else's reactions are a little strange?

EZRA'S shirt is on.

EZRA

Have you guys seen my shirt?

PHOEBE grabs another plant and continues to eat.

SABINE

You're not hungry at all?

SERRA

No.

MATTIAS

No negativity?

SERRA

No. What the hell is going on? What kind of focus test is this?

TROUT

Life is the test. Life is the well of negativity, burrowed deep into the infrastructure of mankind. Its waters run dry. God is dead. We are alone. Trapped in the splintering web of mediocrity. We are the flies who dread the spider's venomous fangs.

Toot toot.

EZRA'S shirt is now off.

EZRA

Have you guys seen my shirt?

SABINE

Well, I think we have seen all we need to see. Mattias?

MATTIAS

Ja. Uh, hey, Serra, we would love it if you'd be so kind as to pop into a breakout room with us for a sec.

Over the following: PHOEBE continues to eat plant dirt, EZRA continues to lose or find clothing, and TROUT grabs

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 21.

*paper and starts scribbling
unnatural symbols.*

SERRA

What?

SABINE

Yes. It would be so much easier to explain if we weren't listening to all the doom and the plant eating and whatnot.

SERRA

You're just gonna leave the rest of them like this?

SABINE

Probably.

SERRA

Are they gonna be okay?

MATTIAS

Probably not.

SERRA

Uh.

SABINE

How much debt did you say you were in again?

That was a big number.

MATTIAS

What if we told you this wasn't really so much like a focus test and it was more like a job interview?

SERRA

What kind of job interview?

SABINE

And see, that is the part that would be so great if we could pop into a breakout room for. I don't really want to watch more of this. Mattias?

MATTIAS

Ja, no, it...it does not get prettier.

Beat.

SABINE

So let's just call that a yes.

*SABINE clicks and PHOEBE,
EZRA, and TROUT'S squares
disappear.*

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 22.

SABINE

Phew! I really thought she was going to eat that whole plant.

MATTIAS

She probably will.

SERRA

I'm sorry--

SABINE

No, we're sorry! Ugh. It's just--you know, if we told people what they were actually testing, they would never do it, you know? We've found this is a much easier way to tell if someone is compatible.

SERRA

Compatible with what?!

SABINE

Right, well--

*Yet again, another thump off
SABINE'S screen.*

SABINE

FOR THE LOVE OF GOD! Mattias, can you--?

MATTIAS

Ja, I got it.

SABINE exits frame.

Over the following, again, a cacophony of sounds off-screen of SABINE'S square: Banging, muffled groans, moving furniture, duct tape, sounds that we're probably about to get more context for.

MATTIAS

Okay, so crash course...Glubthar? He's not really a company mascot or anything like that. He's basically your average undead priest? If you play the Dragons and Dungeons I believe he's equivalent to a lich? I don't know. Semantics. But his current vessel is...deteriorating. He needs a new host. Now, that invisible vapor in the "Fun Boxes," not so much a drug, 100% more some of his life force. Now, when most inhale Glubthar's life force, you see what happened with the hipster and Florida Man, they just don't mix well. Weird stuff happens, you know? But, a very rare percentage of people, Sabine knows the number, are compatible. You,

(MORE)

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 23.

MATTIAS (cont'd)

Serra, you aren't feeling any negativity, no ravenous hunger, you are compatible. You with me so far?

Beat.

SABINE re-enters frame, she is now completely drenched in blood.

SABINE

Okay! Where are we?

MATTIAS

I just told her she's compatible.

SABINE

Oh, perfect! So...well, you can see where this is going, right?

Beat.

SERRA

Yeah, uh...

Sorry, this is just a lot to take in.

SABINE

Of course! Take your time.

Beat.

SERRA

You serve an undead priest. Named Glubthar. And you want me to be his phylactery?

SABINE

Oh, you play Dragons and Dungeons, don't you?

SERRA

Sometimes. Um.

Beat.

SERRA

I mean, how much does it pay?

MATTIAS

10 grand.

SERRA

Okay.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 24.

SABINE

A week.

SERRA

Fuck me.

SABINE

And that's just the starting pay, there's lots of room for growth in the company.

SERRA

Will I, like, still have free will?

SABINE

Oh, totally!

MATTIAS

Loads.

SABINE

It's just, like, you know, having a roommate.

MATTIAS

Just inside your body.

SERRA

Right.

SABINE

We'd start you out on a six month trial period, if you want to stop after that, it's cool. If you want to keep going, that is also cool.

MATTIAS

Any other questions?

Beat.

SERRA

This is, like, a real company? You guys are for real?

SABINE

Yes!

MATTIAS

Totally.

SABINE

100% real.

MATTIAS

We just like to keep it really informal, you know?

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 25.

SABINE

We're hip!

Look, I get it. It's a little unorthodox. But we all spend our mid to late 20s holding down weird jobs, yeah?

MATTIAS

(To SABINE)

Okay, don't try to make your thing seem normal.

SERRA

This is not normal.

SABINE

(Pronouncing both the same)

Oh, potato, potato.

Beat.

MATTIAS

Also, full disclosure, at this point, if you say no, we're probably going to have to kill you. And that's nothing personal, that's just policy.

SABINE

But please don't let that affect your decision.

Beat.

SERRA

I mean, let's be honest, you had me at 10 grand a week.

SABINE

Oh, great!

MATTIAS

Super!

SABINE

Oh, you're not going to regret it. Welcome to the team! We are so excited to have you join us!

SERRA

Thanks for having me.

MATTIAS

Serra, if the email I have is okay I can go ahead and send along a I9 and some other paperwork.

SERRA

Yeah, that's fine.

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Focus: A Zoom Play, Daniel Prillaman, 26.

Oh. Mattias. SABINE

What? MATTIAS

I just realized we never had the others sign the NDA. SABINE

It's probably fine. MATTIAS

Let me see. SABINE

No, it's probably fine. MATTIAS

We should still follow procedure. SABINE

SABINE clicks and PHOEBE, EZRA, and TROUT'S squares return.

PHOEBE is unmoving, a full plant or stalk down their throat.

EZRA'S camera is perhaps cocked or tilted and is nude to a level desired by the producing team and the actor, screaming at the onlookers.

TROUT has fashioned cultist robes out of their curtains and is preaching doom in a language that may or may not be English.

Beat.

It's probably fine. MATTIAS

Also, Sabine, you've got a lot of...ketchup on you.

Maybe take a shower.

When you have a chance.

END OF PLAY.