

*Muster: the script*

Sally O'Reilly

*Exterior, daytime.*

*A pair of columns flank the view of a body of water with land beyond. The sky is clear, the breeze whips up gentle waves and boats bob about. All seems calm.*

## DIRECTOR

*(Shouting)* That's it, that's it, let's hold the scene a while and then ... Captain Daedalus Bullshott enter stage right. That's it, nice and dignified. Think gentleman adventurer. Keep that back nice and straight. Take your position there on the left. Swivel and raise your pistol. Other arm behind your back. Good. Now show us your chest. And your gun. Nice and big, nice and big. Hold it, hold it...

Ok, are you ready, fossil collector? Now, come on slowly, from the front, from behind me, that's it, slowly ... slowly ... like lava. Great. Look at the ground, look at the ground, like you might find a fossil any moment. Excellent. Shuffle round and show us your book, that's it, and the stone in your hand. Not too clearly now – stay mysterious, like the hills. That's it. Bullshot, look over at her. You may be epic, but she's geological – and a gentleman is always curious, but never so rude as to stare. That's it, nice and subtle. Great.

Ok, now, I want the steam-punk couple to enter from the back. Devlyn, you walk on Gambit's right, that's it. And exude. You're the infamously decadent Soderstroms. Don't smile. Sombre's good. It's serious business, being anachronous. Nice touch with the cane there Gambit – could have been an affectation too far, but actually I think it's working well for you. Ok, show us your piercings Devlyn, that's it. And let's turn the volume of the sea up a bit, shall we? No, no, not the *amount* of sea, just the sound levels – the shushing noise, just a touch. That's it. Nice. Hold it for a while everyone. Reach deep

into your characters. Signify as hard as you can without irony – no tipping into pantomime, now. Keep it authentic and credible. And don't lean too heavily on the costumes. Use your body language and facial expressions, draw on every fibre of your being. Feel the part. *Be* the part. That's it. Fabulous.

Ok, man in the pink wetsuit, I want you to rupture the scene now, ok? I want you to cycle on from the front, but circle back out before coming back in again. Got that? Right. Off you go. Lovely. Nice and loopy. Let's really generate a whole new atmos. That's it. Now, pull up there in front of the right-hand column and let's see that briefcase. Make us really wonder what's inside. Maybe lose the smile – that's a bit too much parabasis for what we're after I think. Oh, it's stuck? Ok, we can work with that. Maybe parabasis is fine – it's all Greek, anyhow. So why don't you try holding the smile way too long, until it becomes absurd? That's it. And the briefcase too. Awkward's excellent, yes. I love it.

Ok everyone, hold it nice and steady. Let's have a plane passing in the distance to emphasise the stillness. A long, low rumble please. Lovely. And bring the sea back up again. Yes, I mean the audio! Although you could bring the amount of water up too actually, very, very slowly and steadily – maybe raise it a bit over the next ten minutes, but not enough for us to really notice. Ah, nice touch with the seagulls. We'll use them again later I think. And hold it, everyone, while the woman in black approaches. Great, yes, show us the feather on your nape, that's it, and hide your face behind the paper. That's it. Very enigmatic muse. And turn into the circle now, show us what you're carrying. Ah, a skull – excellent work props department. No stinting on the symbolism there. That's it, nice and slow. Majestic, even. This is death and literature you're embodying. Classic. And hold it everyone. Lovely.

Now, come on in Raven in the purple cape. From behind, yes, that's it. Pause a while. Nice. Now show us your big red brooch. Hmm, a bit homemade looking, but I think we can capitalise on that. Gives it a meta touch in fact. Very clever, very clever. Oh, and a tug on the peak of the hood. I like that a lot. I see you've been intellectualising this. I can hear it now: 'a Brechtian performance of self-consciousness'. Well, while we're at it,

let's have the wind pick up a bit then. And chuck in a couple of flying birds. Really crank up the gothic. Lovely. Lovely. Ok, that's enough. Woah. Let's not get carried away. This isn't the music hall. That's better. Great.

Right, let's keep this narrative moving, shall we? Bring on the young man in camouflage trousers from the left. Turn around and show us your flat cap; locate yourself in the social hierarchies. And let us see those ferrets. On second thoughts, you might be confusing us with the flat cap. Is it a bit clashy with the army thing you've got going on there? Still, I suppose social identifiers aren't as legible as they used to be. We'll keep it in for now. Just keep looking ill at ease; shift your eyeballs about. Good, good.

Ok, what we really need now is another woman. We're doing well on the gender ratio, but you can never have too many women, in my book. Bring on Janus Swan. That's it, from the right; and stand next to the gentleman in the white pith helmet. Bullshott, acknowledge her, she's a lady. Ah, nice touch with the hat raising. Look tough now Janus. This sort of chivalry is too old-fashioned for you. Or is it futuristic? Anyway, show us your binoculars. Thank you, thank you. Soderstroms you can acknowledge her too if you like – she's one of you after all. What was that? You feel more threatened by a little bit difference than someone totally other? I can appreciate that – it's easier to spot flaws in the familiar, after all. You remain stoic too then, Janus. You've seen them, but you don't need their society. Now, let's have a bit of sweet birdsong to contrast with the steam-punky grit. A bit more. Keep it going until I say stop. Keep going...

That's your cue, purple and black horse. No, I don't know why you're purple and black. Think mature poetess meets the Lloyds stallion. That should give you motivation enough. That's fantastic. Walk right across the front there, towards stage left. And turn to me. Make your nostrils nice and big. Bigger! More flare. Excellent. And let's have some more wind. Not too much now. That's it. And can one of the ferrets please clamber over a shoulder. I don't mind which one. Ok, great; and retrieve it, flat-cap man. A bit more wriggling, ferrets. And hold them like a pair of socks. Don't be tentative – they're really just stuff to you. Excellent.

And ... bring on the pirate now please. In you come, yes, from the right, like last time. Stop right there. Make sure your hand's on your pistol. Look sullen. Sullen. No, it's not really like sad; more like boredom with a touch of disgust and a dash of acceptance. Nearly – a bit too much annoyance maybe. We'll keep working on that. Maybe stay blank for now. Ok. And keep that birdsong coming. I haven't said stop yet. And more ferret wriggling please. Lovely. And ... stop the birdsong.

Ok. Come in Starfleet Admiral. Come in from behind the right-hand pillar. That's it. And pause there to punch in some data. Great, great, come forwards and take your position. Three-quarters on. Very heroic. Maybe flash us your insignia. That's it. Your rank means everything to you. And blink into the sun, like it's the future itself. As if you're dazzled by the expanse of space-time unfurling before you. Hold it, hold it. Lovely.

Right, when the young man with the ferrets scratches his head I want some seagulls to cry please. Ah, perfect. Keep still. Still, I say. A bit longer. That's it. Hold it ... Hold it. Now, everyone, in a moment, I want you all to turn round, just before the pigeon lands on the left-hand column. Can you sense it coming in? Ready ... steady ... ah, that's it. Nicely done. And now hold your positions again, looking out to sea. Pigeon, you stay there too. Hold it everyone. And now, pigeon, walk to the right of the pillar, stop and then take off. That's it; fly off, stage right. Brilliant. Hold still everyone else. And now, this is the big denouement. Ready? I'm going to bring the lights down and the dimness of history up, quite fast but nice and smooth. It's going to go a bit black, but don't worry – I'll still be omnipresent, just over here. Trust me ... and ... recede into the past. That's it. Nice and easy does it ... surrender to obscurity ... Lovely.

CURTAIN

