

# Special Screening Today

Marcia Savin





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## SPECIAL SCREENING TODAY

By Marcia Savin

### CAST

JANICE: A timid but eager person.

PHYLLIS: A city-savvy woman.

FRED: A crabby buttinski.

ELEANOR: FRED's long-suffering, apologetic wife.

CUTTER NO. 1 and CUTTER NO. 2: A man and a woman or two women.

MONITOR: A no-nonsense type woman who carries a walkie-talkie.

EXTRAS: If available, they stand in line in front of FRED. They check watches and read papers but should not detract from main action.

### PROPS

FRED's book of film criticism essays

A paper deli coffee cup

A small yogurt carton with spoon and a plastic bag

ELEANOR's cell phone

MONITOR's walkie-talkie and ID badge worn on cord around her neck

The movie passes are computer-generated paper

COSTUMES: Casual outdoor city clothes: coats, jackets.

### Place

*A line outside a city theater for a special movie screening in the afternoon.*

### Time

*The present.*

*At Rise: FRED enters Stage Right, shaking his head angrily, checking his watch, and carrying his book of film criticism. He's been waiting for his wife at the corner and finally decided to get in line. He stretches neck to see offstage Stage Left and shakes it, at the length of the line. He stands near Stage Left exit but leaves a small gap. JANICE enters. She's new to this experience, looks up, squints at a marquee, and frowns, unsure if it's the right place.*

JANICE: (to FRED) Excuse me. Is this the line for the free movie screening?

*(FRED nods, doesn't look up from book. JANICE sighs in relief, gets in line behind him and takes out her pass. She stretches her neck Stage Left, is surprised at how long the line is. PHYLLIS enters Stage Right, hurrying, flustered. She gets in line behind JANICE. They are strangers.)*

PHYLLIS: Whew! *(She catches her breath and stretches neck to see line. Talks half to herself, but JANICE listens and responds.)* Ooh, look at that line!

JANICE: It goes around the block. Is that usual?

FRED: *(doesn't look up from book)* Always.

PHYLLIS: *(smiles)* He's right. That's why I try to come early. *(widens eyes in happy anticipation)* To get a good seat! But this traffic!

*(FRED remembers his wife, stretches neck to right, with irritation and returns to book.)*

JANICE: This is my first movie screening. I'm so excited.

PHYLLIS: I never miss one. I live for cinema. I had to change my dentist appointment to be here.

JANICE: *(impressed)* You did?...I just moved back to the city. I tried retiring to the country but...there's nothing to do!

PHYLLIS: I could never leave the city. Why, these screenings alone make it worth living here. Not just seeing a film before it's released but...*(smiles)* you know...makes you feel like an insider.

JANICE: Oh, yes!

MONITOR: *(calls from off stage left)* Everyone must show their pass. No admittance without a pass.

*(MONITOR enters Stage Left, wearing ID badge around neck, walking down the line, calling. She carries a walkie-talkie)*

MONITOR: Everyone must show their pass. No admittance without the pass.

*(MONITOR turns around, still calling. JANICE holds up her pass. FRED, nervous and irritated, looks around Stage Right for his wife. MONITOR exits Stage Left, muttering into her walkie-talkie.)*

JANICE: *(to PHYLLIS)* I wasn't sure I was in the right line. The marquee doesn't list this movie.

PHYLLIS: Of course! It's secret. Except for 'insiders' like us who answered the ad.

JANICE: *(pleased at being called 'insider')* Do you know what the movie's about?

PHYLLIS: Espionage. Spies. *(wiggles her eyebrows)* Double agents!

JANICE: Ooh! Suspenseful!

FRED: *(eyes on book)* Six years in the making.

*(JANICE and PHYLLIS exchange smiles behind his back at his 'know-it-all' manner)*

PHYLLIS: *(to JANICE)* This director is fabulous. I've seen everything he's done.

FRED: *(eyes on book)* His last was a bomb.

*(PHYLLIS makes a face behind his back and mouths "No." JANICE grins)*

PHYLLIS: *(stretches neck Stage Left)* I just hope we get good seats. The line's so long!

JANICE: Do you think there's torture? I can't watch torture.

PHYLLIS: No, I ...

*(She is distracted seeing CUTTER NO. 1 enter Stage Right and slide into line in front of FRED, who is immersed in his book. PHYLLIS and JANICE stare.)*

PHYLLIS: I...don't think there's...

*(CUTTER NO. 1 punches numbers into a cell phone and talks quietly. He/She directs CUTTER NO. 2 to spot.)*

*(NOTE: For the following lines, fix pronouns to match genders of the CUTTERS.)*

PHYLLIS: *(angry)* Hey! He can't do that! *(to JANICE, deliberately not keeping her voice down)* Did you see that? He just cut in!

JANICE: *(afraid of trouble)* Well, we've got our passes.

PHYLLIS: But we're at the end of the line. I don't want to sit in the first row!

JANICE: First row? Oh, I don't either. My neck gets stiff.

*(CUTTER NO. 2 enters Stage Right, on cell phone, looks around for CUTTER NO. 1. CUTTER NO. 1 sees CUTTER NO. 2, waves to join him/her, smiling a welcome and look of triumph. CUTTER NO. 2 gets in line. They put phones away. All of this is watched with disapproval by PHYLLIS and JANICE)*

PHYLLIS: What? Another one! They can't do that! *(She bends around JANICE and FRED to speak to CUTTERS)* Excuse me.

CUTTER NO. 1: *(turns)* Yes?

PHYLLIS: You cut into the line.

CUTTER NO. 2: Can you prove it?

*(CUTTERS smile, unperturbed. JANICE is stunned by their audacity.)*

PHYLLIS: *(also stunned)* What?

CUTTER NO. 1: Sorry, I've got a call. *(talks into phone)*

PHYLLIS: *(taps FRED)* Sir! You saw them. Tell them they can't cut in.

FRED: *(shrugs)* I mind my own business.

**END OF FREEVIEW**

**You'll want to read and perform this show!**