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# The Young Man

A Short One Act Comedy

by

# Heath Houseman

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# The Young Man

## by Heath Houseman

### CHARACTERS

THE YOUNG MAN: *Early 20s, short, blond, blue-eyed, wiry.*

THE DIRECTOR: *50s, tall.*

THE YOUNG WOMAN: *Early 20s.*

THE FIVE STANLEYS: *Late 20s, five tall, hairy, bulky, apish men, including STANLEY #1, a guitar player.*

ACTORS: *Three actors of any age.*

### SETTING

*A bare stage; auditions about to begin*

### TIME

*The present*

## The Young Man by Heath Houseman

### A Play in One Act

SETTING: *A bare stage; Audience waits for show to begin.*

AT RISE: *The DIRECTOR enters the house floor, clipboard in hand, bullhorn in the other, crosses to a seat in the center of the front row, sits. Long beat.*

DIRECTOR

*(Irritated, shouting)*

Oh my god...!

*Lights go down on the house. The stage remains lit.*

*The DIRECTOR pulls himself up, faces the audience. He studies them as he backs to the stage and then sprawls himself against it, arms out, like a crucified Christ.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

*(Bullhorn)*

I feel like I have not slept for 48 hours. I want you to know that before we begin. *(Beat)* And I have not had my Starbucks. When I feel like I have not slept for 48 hours, I get cranky. When I feel like I have not slept for 48 hours and I have not had my Starbucks, I get arrogantly argumentative. Why do I get arrogantly argumentative? Because Starbucks supplies vital nutrients to my brain that prevent me from being arrogantly argumentative and, additionally, helps mellow the Glenfiddich. I wonder where my Starbucks is? Does anyone know? Anyone? I'd love to have my Starbucks so that I could be cranky instead of arrogantly argumentative, but alas, this is where I am, this is the state of my mind and being before we begin, because I do not. Have. My. Damned. Starbucks. *(Beat)* If you're here because I asked you to be here, thank you for coming. If you're here and I did not ask you to be here, I want you to go away now.

*An ACTOR sitting in the audience gets up and leaves.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

Any more of you?

*Another ACTOR sitting in the audience gets up and leaves.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

That it?

*And another ACTOR in the audience gets up and leaves.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

Thank you. And just in case – I'm covering all my bases – if you are an actor here for callbacks to Tennessee Williams' "A Streetcar Named Desire," soon to be playing at the Old Village Playhouse, directed by me, you are in the right building. *(Beat)* Now. If you're cast, rehearsals begin next week and will last nine weeks, two or three nights a week, seven to ten PM, as well as Saturday and Sunday afternoons--yes, both of them. Don't like it, go cry to mommy. I will do everything in my substantial power to maximize your time during rehearsal, but I expect every actor, no matter how small, to attend every rehearsal, and for you smart-asses out there, when I say "small," I'm not referring to your height. I'm referring to your part, and when I say "part," I'm referring to your role and nothing more. Besides, we all know there are no small parts, only small actors, and even if you have one, a small part, it's not the size that matters but how you use it. You cannot get sick. If you do get sick, I will euthanize you and have you replaced. I'm very German that way. So. Important to remember. Make a note. Do. Not. Get. Sick. *(Beat)* And, finally, the acting work you are about to undertake is for the public good without charge and I thank you in advance for your generosity. If you don't know what the hell I'm talking about, let me nutshell it for you: You're putting yourself through this for love, not money. Still not clear? Free. Free, free, free. You're all doing this for free. I want to see the Stanleys first. Up on the stage.

*Five ACTORS – The STANLEYS – and one short, scrawny YOUNG MAN leave their seats and step onto the stage.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

Line up. Side by side. Shoulder to shoulder. Oh my god! Line up, side by side, shoulder to shoulder, like you're in the Navy, the Navy, the Navy. That's it. That's it. Stop. Stop moving. Stop moving. Be still...! Pugs. You know pugs? Small dogs with very little brain? That's what you are.

*The DIRECTOR sizes them up.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

You. Kid. You're reading the Young Man. Off.

YOUNG MAN

OK. But I'd like to...

DIRECTOR

"OK" is what I want to hear. Not "OK, but." OK? On the same page? Good. Off. Off. Get off.

OK, but. YOUNG MAN

"OK, but." No. DIRECTOR

OK, but, yes, I'd like to read for Stanley Kowalski. YOUNG MAN

OK, but – DIRECTOR

Yes. YOUNG MAN

No. DIRECTOR

I want to read for Stanley Kowalski. YOUNG MAN

No, no, no, no. We are not going there. Look at you. You're not the leading man. You're the leading man's best friend. Hasn't anyone ever told you that before? DIRECTOR

Yes, but – YOUNG MAN

You are reading for the Young Man because you look like a boy. Not a man. DIRECTOR

OK, but. YOUNG MAN

Not "OK, but." Not OK. OK? DIRECTOR

OK, but – YOUNG MAN

Oh my god! DIRECTOR

I can play him. I can do Stanley. I know I can. I got him in me. YOUNG MAN

DIRECTOR

Young, young, young man. You're the Young Man. That's who you are. Don't fight it. You're short. You're blond. Blue-eyed. Pale-skinned. You're Dutch. You're a little Dutch boy. You could be a little Dutch boy with your finger stuck in a Dutch dike.

YOUNG MAN

I'm not a boy. I'm an adult. A grown man.

DIRECTOR

You're short then. A short adult who looks like a boy.

YOUNG MAN

And I'm not Dutch. I'm Finlandian.

DIRECTOR

Exactly what I said. Dutch. Boy! This is about type.

YOUNG MAN

Stella!

DIRECTOR

What are you doing?

YOUNG MAN

Stella!

DIRECTOR

Stop it.

YOUNG MAN

Stella!

DIRECTOR

Stop it this instant!

*The DIRECTOR stomps onto the stage.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

You are not in control of this audition! I am! I am the director! I control everything! Stop, stop, stop!

YOUNG MAN

I'm an actor. I can act this. Just give me a chance and I'll prove it to you.

*Beat.*

DIRECTOR

Now. Young Man. Look, I appreciate your enthusiasm. You're passionate and that inspires even a cynic like me. But this is the theatre—

YOUNG MAN

And it's supposed to be a positive place where a shared political and social viewpoint encourages tolerance and rejects stereotypes and marginalization.

DIRECTOR

Is it?

YOUNG MAN

That's what I've been taught.

DIRECTOR

Oh. I see. I'm oppressing you. That it?

YOUNG MAN

Theatre is a place without fear because you know you're not going to be made to feel uncomfortable, unwelcome, unsafe because of biological sex, race/ethnicity, sexual orientation, gender identity or expression, cultural background, religious affiliation, age, or physical or mental ability. Or height.

DIRECTOR

Anything else you'd like to add to that list?

YOUNG MAN

No. I think that's it. No, wait - fat people. I forgot fat people, I mean, weight. For fat people dealing with, you know, fatness.

DIRECTOR

Oh, dear, oh dear. I'm afraid someone has lied to you. There are no safe spaces here. There are no trigger warnings. Theatre, by its very nature, is dangerous and it does not appreciate or even recognize conformity. If you want to be an intolerant, book burning, mollycoddled fascist, go to your local college or university and suck on a dum dum.

YOUNG MAN

I'm not a baby.

DIRECTOR

Yes, and this isn't a day care. You will accept the brutal reality that you cannot play Stanley Kowalski because you look like a little Dutch boy with your finger stuck in a Dutch dike. Or you can leave.

*Beat.*

YOUNG MAN

OK, but –



DIRECTOR  
We're not going there.

YOUNG MAN  
Fine, but –

DIRECTOR  
Don't play semantics with me.

YOUNG MAN  
Theatre, by its very nature, is meant to challenge the status quo, right? Or in the very least, it can.

DIRECTOR  
Who taught you that?

YOUNG MAN  
No one. It's called improv. I'm improv-ing. As an actor, I am challenging the Stanley Kowalski status quo!

DIRECTOR  
OK, but –

YOUNG MAN  
Ah-ha!

DIRECTOR  
I see that a visual demonstration is necessary. Look at these men. What do you see?

YOUNG MAN  
They're tall.

DIRECTOR  
Yes.

YOUNG MAN  
Bulky.

DIRECTOR  
Yes.

YOUNG MAN  
Hairy.

DIRECTOR  
Dare I say, apish?

YOUNG MAN

OK, apish. Apish works.

DIRECTOR

Thus, they look like Stanley Kowalski. You are the antithesis of hairy, bulky, tall and apish. Thus, you look like—

YOUNG MAN

A little Dutch boy with his finger stuck in a Dutch dike.

DIRECTOR

I was going to say a short, svelte, hairless, un-apish naked mole rat.

YOUNG MAN

You have something against short people, don't you?

DIRECTOR

Yes.

YOUNG MAN

You're a racist.

DIRECTOR

No. I'm a bigot. Short people get in my way. I'm always tripping over them. Very annoying.

YOUNG MAN

Do you hate Chihuahuas?

DIRECTOR

I love Chihuahuas.

YOUNG MAN

But Chihuahuas are small.

DIRECTOR

There's a difference between "small" and "short." Besides, I have never heard a Chihuahua whine about being small. They're confident little fighters.

YOUNG MAN

So are naked mole rats. And that's my point.

DIRECTOR

You're comparing naked mole rats to Stanley Kowalski?

YOUNG MAN

No. But what if Stanley Kowalski was like a mean little Mexican Chihuahua?

*The YOUNG MAN BARKS like a mean little Mexican Chihuahua.*

DIRECTOR

That doesn't sound Polish.

YOUNG MAN

Huh?

DIRECTOR

Stanley Kowalski is Polish. If he were a dog, his bark would have more of a Slavic ring to it. Less Mexican, more Indo-European. You know, more Polack. Does that offend you?

YOUNG MAN

I think so.

DIRECTOR

And that's my point. You can't play him. You wouldn't know how.

YOUNG MAN

This isn't fair. You're not being fair.

DIRECTOR

Are you going to cry to mommy? If you are, can I come? That would be fun to watch.

YOUNG MAN

You're mean. I heard you were mean.

DIRECTOR

And arrogantly argumentative. Because I haven't had my Starbucks!

YOUNG MAN

Well, I'm not going anywhere until you let me audition for Stanley.

DIRECTOR

Oooo. A threat.

YOUNG MAN

Justice. For short actors everywhere.

*Beat.*

DIRECTOR

All right. I'll give you a shot. But since I'm caving-in to your demands, I set the rules. Agreed?

YOUNG MAN

As long as they're fair.

DIRECTOR

Since you're improvisational, I will give you a suggestion—

YOUNG MAN

Chihuahua!

DIRECTOR

—and you must use it in the audition. If you pull it off, then we'll talk. If you don't, it's so long, farewell, auf Wiedersehen, good night, I never want to see you at an audition of mine again. Those are the rules. Fair enough?

YOUNG MAN

Agreed. Give it to me.

DIRECTOR

Hitler.

YOUNG MAN

Who?

DIRECTOR

Hitler.

YOUNG MAN

Chihuahua. I'm ready for Chihuahua. Stanley Kowalski, mean little Mexican Chihuahua.

DIRECTOR

Hitler is your suggestion.

YOUNG MAN

Can I use any props or costumes I like?

DIRECTOR

Sure, in the spirit of improv, why not? Have at it. You will find what you need right over—

YOUNG MAN

I know where they are.

*The YOUNG MAN exits.*

DIRECTOR

Gentlemen? Thank you for your patience. One of you please go with our naked mole rat to make sure he comes back.

*STANLEY #1 exits, following after the YOUNG MAN.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

The rest of you remain on stage. Should he try to escape, your job is to prevent him from scurrying away, block any and every exit. Use this time to fine-tune your aggression so that when you audition for the part of Stanley you will be exactly where you need to be. If it helps, may I suggest a simple acting exercise: Imagine what it would be like to grab that young man by the collar in a drunken rage and beat him senseless. You can call him Stella, if you like. And remember, the more time I spend with him, the less time I spend with you. Understand? Good. Very good. *(Calling out)* Are you ready?

YOUNG MAN

*(Offstage)*

Almost!

DIRECTOR

*(Calling out)*

I'm going to take my seat and when you're ready, you may begin. At your leisure.

*The DIRECTOR leaves the stage and takes his seat.*

DIRECTOR (Cont'd)

This is what happens when I don't get my Starbucks. I told you, all of you, a thousand times, when I don't get my Starbucks, things like this happen. But nooooo, you don't listen. I don't get my Starbucks. This happens!

*STANLEY #1 enters and comes to attention like a German soldier.*

STANLEY #1

Achtung!

*THE REMAINING STANLEYS all come to attention like German soldiers.*

*The YOUNG MAN enters wearing a black Nazi SS uniform with cap and Hitler mustache.*

*STANLEY #1 walks by his side as if he is his guard.*

*The YOUNG MAN inspects the men.*

YOUNG MAN

*(Thick German accent)*

Unt tall. Unt hairy. Unt bulky. Unt apish. *(Shouting)* Show me your papers! *(Beat; struggling to control)* I... apologize... for my outburst. Most unprofessional. Forgive me. *(Clicks his heels together)* My name is Adolph Hitler unt I am auditioning for zee lead male part of Stanley Kowalski in "A Streetcar Named Desire" by zee American playwright Tennessee Williams.

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Very good. Before you begin, tell us a little about yourself.

YOUNG MAN

Uh... ja. Ja, ja! I am zee High Chancellor of Germany, born in Austria, leader of zee Nazi Party, the man who coined zee phrase "First Poland unt then zee World" (with apologies to Stanley Kowalski), author of zee international best seller for zee past 90 years, "Mein Kampf," unt its sequel, "Mein Kampf for Dummies" (self-published unt selling like German pancakes in zee Middle East), recognized painter, Lederhosen enthusiast, unt lover of doggies.

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Why are you here?

YOUNG MAN

Why? Ja. I have always dreamed of being a song and dance man.

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

You realize "A Streetcar Named Desire" is not a musical?

YOUNG MAN

Ah, ja, but it should be.

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

And what scene will you perform for us today?

YOUNG MAN

Scene three, the famous Marlon Brando Shtella scene.

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

The famous what scene?

YOUNG MAN

Shtella, Shtella, Shtella!

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Whenever you're ready.

YOUNG MAN

*(Takes a beat to get into character)*

Shtella! My babydoll's left me! Shtel-laaaahhhhh! SHTELL-LLAHHHHH!!!

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Thank you. Next.

YOUNG MAN

Nein, nein, nein!

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Next.

YOUNG MAN

Show me your papers!

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Next!

YOUNG MAN

I must sing! I must dance! Take it away, jungen!

*STANLEY #1 is handed a guitar and he plays an excerpt from Cole Porter's "Anything Goes."*

*The YOUNG MAN sings and dances.*

*THE OTHER STANLEYS link arms and goose step, Rockette style, behind the YOUNG MAN.*

*The YOUNG MAN prepares to sing.*

YOUNG MAN (Cont'd)

*(Singing; thick German accent)*

In olden days, a glimpse of stocking  
Was looked on as something shocking  
But now, God knows.  
Anything goes.  
Good authors too who once knew better words  
Now only use four-letter words  
Writing prose.  
Anything goes  
If driving fast cars you like,  
If Old hymns you like,  
If bare limbs you like,  
If Mae West you like,  
Or me undressed you like...

*TWO STANLEYS tear off the YOUNG MAN's Nazi uniform, revealing a costume underneath: a black sequined corset with shoulder straps, black briefs with garter snaps, black fishnet stockings and black fingerless, elbow-length gloves – Hitler in drag.*

YOUNG MAN (Cont'd)

Why, nobody will oppose.  
Anything goes.

*The YOUNG MAN and THE FOUR STANLEYS do a high-octane tap dance number with a big finish.*

*Long beat.*

DIRECTOR

*(Bullhorn)*

Everyone take five. You. Stay.

*THE FIVE STANLEYS exit. The DIRECTOR walks onto the stage and stares at the YOUNG MAN.*

YOUNG MAN

Theatre is dangerous you said.

DIRECTOR

Did I?

YOUNG MAN

Ja.

DIRECTOR

No safe spaces.

YOUNG MAN

Ja.

DIRECTOR

Would you like to be in our play?

YOUNG MAN

Ja.

DIRECTOR

Rehearsals start next week. Work on your lines. We'll explore your character together, see what we can do with that inner Chihuahua – er, Hitler, er, Dutch boy – see what we can find and take it from there.



YOUNG MAN

Oh, thank you, thank you, thank you!

**This is Not the End of the Play**  
**Ending Intentionally Omitted for Security Purposes**