

the grind.

Story by JJ Warshaw
& Nick Parker

Book by JJ Warshaw

Lyrics by Nick Parker

Music by JJ Warshaw

CHARACTERS.

Except when noted otherwise, casting is not color/ethnicity specified. Some cast doublings are mandatory, some are suggestions. The goal should be a heterogenous cast, reflecting the diversity of a modern American city.

Minimum cast size is 9 — 4 Female-identifying, 5 Male-identifying.

DANI, female, 24, an aspiring writer, played by an actress of color. Aspiring, determined, kind, and overworked. (Soprano / High Mezzo)

Dani's Family:

MOM, Dani's mother, 60's. Stubborn but caring. (Alto)

ANNE, Dani's sister, 29, played by a white actress. Former wild child. Rough around the edges but getting smoother. (Alto/Belt)

BABY, Anne's infant son. (Must have strong falsetto range)

Dani's Work:

RANDY, male, mid to late 30's, owner/manager of Randy's Daily Grind. Doesn't have the best employees and isn't handling it well. He is double cast as Baby. Can also play the Music Agent Customer.

CASEY, female, 24, Dani's friend/coworker at Randy's. In a band with Charlie, Miles and Wayne.

Laid back lead singer. (Mezzo Soprano)

CHARLIE, male, late 20's, Dani's coworker at Randy's. The fun one. (Tenor)

MILES, male, late 20's, Dani's coworker at Randy's. The quiet one. (Baritone/Bass)

WAYNE, male, late 20's, Dani's coworker at Randy's. Self-appointed band manager after reading a couple of online articles. (Tenor)

Everyone Else:

JEFF, male, mid to late 20's, Dani's maybe/maybe-not boyfriend. Charming but hard to read. (Tenor)

ERICA, female, 24, college acquaintance of Dani's, played by a white actress. Wealthy and connected. Can be double cast with Anne.

RACHEL WHEELER, late 20s. A striver. Can be double cast with Anne or Erica.

KATHERYN HOYT, female, 40's, professional writer/editor. Can be double cast with Mom.

JESSICA, early 20's, pretty and kind. Can be double cast with Casey.

ENSEMBLE. Optional. 3 or more, any part not specified here (e.g., train conductor) can be played by an ensemble which, in addition to the other cast, can be used as coffee shop customers, background dancers, BookWise audience, etc. An ensemble is not necessary, however.

NOTES.

A “ / ” in the text indicates the next line should begin and overlap with the current line.

SETTING.

A large American city, last Tuesday.

Suddenly, RANDY flings open the staff door. It slams against the wall. The music instantly cuts and the gang freezes. RANDY is controlled frustration. Applause break.

He paces to the stereo system and turns on new music – soft, easy listening (#3b). RANDY takes a deep breath to bring down his anger levels and enhance managerial impactfulness.

RANDY

Could everybody please get over here?

(they shuffle over)

Can someone remind me the rule about store music?

Beat.

CASEY

...Pre-approved / music only.

RANDY

(ending CASEY's sentence with her)

Pre-approved music only, thank you, Casey. And what was I hearing from the back room?

WAYNE

Straight jams.

RANDY

Not *pre-approved* jams, Wayne. I respect the fact that you're all in a band together. That's fun. And I'm glad Randy's Daily Grind is an environment where you feel comfortable sharing your creative interests *(he can't stop himself)* that take all your focus away from this even though it's your actual job *(pulling back)* and I'm sorry we're back on topic. When you play unauthorized music on the speakers, that's not what Randy's is about.

CHARLIE

Word.

RANDY

Please save your comments until the end, Charlie. *My brand, this brand* – the Randy brand-y –

(He points to the sign as he says this for the millionth time. The GANG maybe reluctantly joins in halfway through.)

is eco-sustainable coffee at fair prices with excellent service. Okay? We're not a "Coffee Corporation". I certainly encourage your unique and creative pursuits. But we need to be *on brand* and we need to be professionals.

DANI bursts in. They all turn and look.

DANI

Sorry there was a delay.

RANDY

You've gotta be *freakin'* kidding me, Dani!

Maybe some of the customers hear and turn. RANDY storms off and slams the staff door. He quickly reopens it.

RANDY *(cont'd)*

I'll be back soon. Have an empowering day.

He slams the door again. DANI is still in high spirits.

DANI

Randy's pissed.

CASEY

Yeah, he's on crack today.

DANI

He put this music on?

DANI turns the stereo off with her phone.

WAYNE

Charlie, see how many people listened.

CHARLIE

(checking his phone)

Whoa. We're at *four* monthly listeners.

WAYNE

Boom! And that's in like, thirty minutes. Imagine if we kept this pace up.

CASEY

That's us, man —

WAYNE

Exactly! We're not even breaking a sweat!

CASEY

No. Wayne, the four listeners are just *us*.

WAYNE processes and then deflates.

DANI

(looking at the phone)

You're on all the streaming apps, now?? Dang, this looks legit, guys.

CHARLIE

Yeah the official release is tonight at the show. This morning's the... um... what's—

CHARLIE looks to WAYNE.

WAYNE

(still a bit crestfallen)

Soft release.

CHARLIE

It's the soft release.

DANI

Wait, you said the show's tonight?

CASEY

Yeah. We're opening for Jeff, fool.

DANI

What!?

CHARLIE

Didn't you see the flyer?

CHARLIE hands DANI the flyer.

DANI

Charlie, this has last month's date on it.

CHARLIE

...that's my bad, team.

CASEY

But you got a Facebook invite, right?

CASEY looks to CHARLIE.

CHARLIE

...that's also my bad, team.

DANI

It's fine. As long as it's before Jeff's set, I can make it.

The GANG ad libs 'Yes!', 'Thank you, Dani', 'Hell yeah'.

MILES

You're still like our only fan who's not related to us so, thanks.

CHARLIE

And then we can all hang at the partayy!

The rest of the GANG expresses its enthusiasm.

DANI

What party?

CASEY

It's our seven-year anniversary working for Randycakes.

DANI

(almost involuntary out of disgust)

Seven?

CASEY

Yeah, I know. It's super sad. But we're gonna get *stupid*.

The others laugh and agree.

RANDY peaks his head out the staff door.

RANDY

Are we being professionals right now?