

THE RACCOON BALLET

A Comedy About Preservation, Perception, and Jazz Hands

by Amanda J. Korth

SAMPLE SCRIPT

Excerpt from Act One, Scene 3 — “Audience Development”

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PIP gestures STAGE LEFT.

PIP

Dexter increased attendance at the East Park Squirrel Players by thirty-one percent.

VIOLETTA

Squirrels.

PIP

Regional theater.

VIOLETTA

Squirrels.

From backstage—

DEXTER

Thank you.

DEXTER VALE enters.

An OPOSSUM of considerable self-possession.

Glasses.

Scarf.

Portfolio.

Professional polish.

And a long, mostly bare tail that every raccoon immediately notices.

Behind him is AGNES.

A small RABBIT, played by a child or very short adult.

She wears a neat SERVICE ANIMAL vest and carries a folded crash pad nearly as large as she is.

AGNES says nothing.

She does not need to.

The raccoons stare at DEXTER'S tail.

DEXTER stops.

Looks at them.

DEXTER

You have something to say?

Everyone suddenly looks elsewhere.

ROCKY

No.

DEXTER

Your face does.

ROCKY glances at his own enormous striped tail.

Then Dexter's.

DEXTER catches him.

DEXTER

Comparing?

ROCKY

No.

DEXTER

Assessing?

ROCKY

No.

Beat.

ROCKY

Feeling fortunate?

PIP closes his eyes.

DEXTER studies ROCKY.

DEXTER

Thank you for your honesty.

VIOLETTA steps forward.

VIOLETTA

Madame Violetta.

DEXTER

Dexter Vale. Audience development. Cultural strategy. Cross-species engagement.

VIOLETTA looks at PIP.

VIOLETTA

Cross-species engagement.

PIP

Growing field.

DEXTER gestures behind him.

DEXTER

And this is Agnes. My service animal.

AGNES gives a tiny professional nod.

ROCKY looks at the crash pad.

ROCKY

What does she do?

PIP

Rocky.

DEXTER

You may ask what work she is trained to perform.

ROCKY nods seriously.

ROCKY

What work is she trained to perform?

DEXTER

Risk recognition and fall mitigation.

ROCKY looks at the pad.

ROCKY

That did not help.

AGNES turns it around.

Printed clearly across it:

AUTONOMIC RESPONSE PAD

KEVIN reads.

KEVIN

Possum mattress.

DEXTER turns.

DEXTER

Autonomic Response Pad.

KEVIN

You fall on it.

DEXTER

That does not alter the terminology.

VIOLETTA steps between them.

VIOLETTA

Mr. Vale—

DEXTER

Dexter.

VIOLETTA

Mr. Vale.

DEXTER accepts defeat.

VIOLETTA

Pip tells me you are qualified to advise a classical repertory company.

DEXTER

I advise arts organizations on audience growth, accessibility and cultural relevance.

VIOLETTA

Have you ever run a ballet company?

DEXTER

No.

VIOLETTA

Danced professionally?

DEXTER

No.

VIOLETTA

Lived in a condemned opera house?

DEXTER

Oddly enough, no.

VIOLETTA looks at PIP.

VIOLETTA

An embarrassment of credentials.

DEXTER opens his portfolio.

DEXTER

Regional squirrel theater. Two park-district dance companies. A successful touring otter percussion act.

ROCKY

Otters?

DEXTER

Very strong branding.

He turns a page.

DEXTER

And six regrettable months with a hamster vocal ensemble.

CELESTINE

What happened?

DEXTER closes his eyes briefly.

DEXTER

Cheek pouches.

Beat.

DEXTER

You cannot sustain a vowel with three sunflower seeds and half a grape stored in your face.

KEVIN

That feels self-evident.

DEXTER closes the portfolio.

DEXTER

May I observe?

VIOLETTA

You have not already?

DEXTER

I watched from Bella Luna.

VIOLETTA freezes.

VIOLETTA

You ate during rehearsal?

DEXTER

Coffee.

VIOLETTA weighs this.

Barely acceptable.

VIOLETTA

Company. Places.

AGNES' nose twitches.

DEXTER takes out a notebook.

VIOLETTA claps once.

AGNES looks sharply at Dexter.

She moves the folded pad a little closer.

VIOLETTA

The Three Brothers.

The company assumes position.

DEXTER

Before you begin—what is this intended to communicate?

VIOLETTA

The founding of the opera house.

DEXTER writes.

DEXTER

Excellent.

Beat.

DEXTER

How does the audience know that?

VIOLETTA looks at him.

VIOLETTA

They watch.

DEXTER

Yes.

Beat.

DEXTER

And then?

PIP tries not to smile.

VIOLETTA sees him.

VIOLETTA

From the arrival.

Beat.

VIOLETTA

Through the raising of the house.

Music begins: a brief recurring orchestral passage from Léo Delibes' Sylvia.

RUFUS enters as Solomon.

ROCKY and KEVIN join him as Henry and Samuel.

They establish arrival.

Commerce.

Negotiation.

CELESTINE and PIP become townspeople.

Then ROCKY and KEVIN lift an enormous imaginary beam.

RUFUS gestures grandly toward the invisible structure.

The others gather beneath it.

The sequence lasts only twenty to thirty seconds.

They hit the final pose.

Music cuts.

DEXTER looks at his notes.

Silence.

VIOLETTA

Well?

DEXTER

Technically strong.

RUFUS smiles.

DEXTER

Visually disciplined.

VIOLETTA nods.

DEXTER

Completely incomprehensible.

RUFUS stops smiling.

VIOLETTA

Excuse me?

AGNES' nose twitches.

She picks up the pad.

DEXTER

Without knowing the story, I saw three raccoons arrive, sell something, and develop an unusual interest in imaginary lumber.

AGNES unfolds one panel.

VIOLETTA

It is stylized movement.

DEXTER

Yes.

Second panel.

VIOLETTA

Inherited choreography.

DEXTER

Yes.

Third panel.

VIOLETTA

It has survived generations.

DEXTER

Admirable.

VIOLETTA

Then what exactly is your objection?

AGNES quietly takes DEXTER by the sleeve.

DEXTER ignores her.

DEXTER

Your audience thinks you are stretching.

VIOLETTA CLAPS.

Hard.

DEXTER freezes.

His eyes widen.

END OF SAMPLE

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