

The Maltese Frenchman

by Cary Pepper

1 Maggie — twenties

Female — Comic

2

3 *(This familiar situation of the starving actress plugging away*
4 *at a day job is all too familiar to young actors. Maggie's*
5 *monolog, however, challenges the actor to become an expert*
6 *storyteller and a comedian for much of the narrative, while*
7 *saving the real punch line — and its corresponding desperation —*
8 *until the very end. It also offers the actor an excellent*
9 *opportunity to devise her own vis-à-vis, and play off his/her*
10 *reactions as Maggie speaks. In the original play, Maggie has*
11 *just met a young man with whom she's been discussing*
12 *personal fantasies. He has just told her one of his, and she is*
13 *now responding.)*

14

15 I'm an actress. And you know what THAT'S like. MY
16 fantasy is to be in the right place at the right time, run
17 in to the right person, and get cast in something. Or at
18 least be asked to audition. Because let me tell you, I'm
19 GOOD. But of course that never happens.

20

21 You know what it all comes down to? Control. How much
22 other people have, how much you have, but most of the
23 time, how LITTLE you have! It's always about who's
24 calling the shots. It's all jumping through hoops! Or
25 trying to CONTROL the hoops. Even a job like this. It's
26 not your typical, soul-eating, nine-to-fiver, but ... "You
27 Name It, We Do It"?? What is that? A polite way to say,
28 "I'm a servant"? A nice way to say, "Here I am, abuse
29 me!" Because you should see some of the things we are

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asked to do! Some of the stories I could tell you ... All
2 right, I WILL tell you a story. I'm called to this
3 apartment, and there are these two guys, the one who
4 lives there, and his plumber. Who turns out to be his
5 brother-in-law. And for the first five minutes, all they do
6 is say to each other:

7

"It leaks."

8

"It don't leak."

9

"It does leak."

10

"It don't leak."

11

"It leaks."

12

"It don't."

13

14 Then the conversation begins to get a little more
15 interesting.

16

"It oozes."

17

"It oozes?"

18

"Yeah. It leaks so slow you can't see it."

19

"Then how do you know it's leaking?"

20

"I know. I seen it."

21

"You just said you can't see it."

22

"Yeah. But I seen it."

23

"How do you know it leaks, if you can't see it?"

24

"Believe me, it leaks."

25

"How do you know?"

26

"I seen it."

27

28 Okay, they exhaust all THOSE permutations. And it
29 turns out "It leaks" wants me to watch the faucet, to
30 prove to "It don't leak," that it does leak. "You think you
31 can do that?" What I think is, this is a joke! But no —
32 he's serious! "It don't leak" won't take his word for it,
33 so he's brought in "a disinterested third party." Then,
34 "It don't leak" turns to me and asks, "You know us?"

35

"I've never met either one of you."

"So you don't know us."

"Yes, that, too."

So, THEY go to a baseball game, and leave ME to watch the faucet. *(Pause.)* Now, you could say what's the big deal? There are a lot harder jobs I could have gotten. Like the time I had to take a 300-pound, highly agitated St. Bernard to a cat show! Or you could say, I HAVE BETTER THINGS TO DO WITH MY TIME!

But a pay check is a pay check. So I sit there, staring at the faucet. And nothing happens. I sit, and I stare and I stare and I stare ... Nothing.

And then I see it ... The tiniest drop, peeking out at me. And slowly it gets bigger and bigger, becoming more visible. And it begins to take shape ... filling out, getting rounder, fuller, fatter. Like a caterpillar emerging from a cocoon. And finally, it's a big, fat, swollen pearl, so big and round and heavy I don't know how it's staying up there ... And then it doesn't ... it drops off, and I can actually see it falling, as if my perception has been heightened. And it falls ... down ... down ... down ... and then ... splat! It hits the sink. And I start to let out this huge whoop of joy, because I have done it! I got the proof! I did it! And ...

I realize I'm getting excited over a drop of water! And something is REALLY WRONG with this picture. Because look at the utter, complete CRAP I am doing ... ! And it isn't even MY crap! It's THEIR crap. It's important to THEM! Like the woman who sent me out to get a box of rainbow paper clips that was available at only ONE store, and who made me sign a CONFIDENTIALITY PLEDGE before she would tell me where the store was! What do I care where they sell rainbow paper clips!? To me it's just an errand! It's a JOB! It's a DAY JOB! Not

a CAREER! I HAVE a career! And it ISN'T going to the store, or doing your laundry, or buying your wife an anniversary present, or meeting your cousin at the airport ... or watching your faucet drip!!!

I am an ACTRESS!! I am a GOOD actress!!! And ... *(Now completely calm:)* ... this has NOTHING to do with what we were talking about.

BUT THAT FELT REALLY GOOD!