

NEVER BETTER
Episode: "Rex Settles Down"

by

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"Rex Settles Down"

ACT ONE

SCENE A

INT. DAYROOM - DAY

(REX, SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, HESTER, MARIE, DIRECTOR JONES)

SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, AND HESTER SIT IN THE DAYROOM OF THEIR RETIREMENT HOME, WATCHING TV. OTHER RESIDENTS MILL ABOUT, READ NEWSPAPERS AT TABLES, OR STARE OUT THE WINDOWS AT THE PLEASANT GREENERY. WHITE-SUITED ORDERLIES COME AND GO, TIDYING UP.

ENTER DIRECTOR JONES AND MARIE.

DIRECTOR JONES

And this is our dayroom, where many of the residents spend their time relaxing, socializing, watching TV, reading, doing arts and crafts, playing cards, watching TV, or watching TV.

MARIE

Well, thank goodness for variety on cable.

DIRECTOR JONES

Actually, I think someone once just tuned in Turner Classic Movies then smashed the remote. No one has ever seemed to mind, except for the colorizing riots of the 80's.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

MARIE

I hear you. I can remember dad forcing us to watch "It's a Wonderful Life" wearing welder's goggles. Well, what do you think, dad? (calls out the door) Dad? Will you please come in here.

Enter REX MASTERS reluctantly, looking around with snobbish distaste.

REX

You know, I think I'd prefer to be the one that flew over this nest.

Rex turns to go, but Marie catches him by the arm.

MARIE

Dad, it's not a sanatorium, or a prison, it's a retirement home, filled with people like you.

DIRECTOR JONES

That's true, Mr. Masters. The residents here at Desmond Hills are mostly alumni of the Hollywood studio system. We are largely subsidized by pension funds set up by studios and actors' guilds, even

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRECTOR JONES

(CONTINUED)

various stagehands' unions. That's why we can offer such low costs to people like yourself.

REX

How wonderful. Join the has-beens for a very reasonable price.

MARIE

Stop it, dad. (to Director Jones)
I'm sorry about that.

DIRECTOR JONES

Perfectly understandable. It's a big adjustment, especially at a time of life when people don't usually welcome change. But I think you'll agree our facilities and care are excellent. I've worked here for many years, and been director for nearly a decade, and I haven't heard a single complaint. That is, since I got an iPod.

Jones chuckles as Rex and Marie stare. Rex wanders off, looking around suspiciously

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

MARIE

Sorry, but very little after the 50's has registered on dad's consciousness. I wouldn't mention your iPod too much or he'll think aliens have taken over your mind.

DIRECTOR JONES

Hmm. That explains why Mrs. Kartoski always points at my earbuds and yells "They're here!" In any event, let your father stay for the day, meet some people, get a feel for the place. You come back in the evening and I'll have all the paperwork ready. You can decide then what you want to do.

MARIE

Thank your, Mr. Jones.

DIRECTOR JONES

If you come to my office for a minute, I'll get you copies of everything you'll want to look over ahead of time.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

MARIE

That sounds fine. (to Rex) Dad,
I'll be back in a few minutes.

Rex ignores her, distracted as he looks around the room.
Marie and Jones leave.

ACT ONE

SCENE B

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)

(REX, SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, HESTER, FINGER
DIRECTOR)

Rex continues to slowly circle the dayroom. He examines things on the shelves, tables, and walls. An elderly woman honks a horn tied to her walker and startles him out of her way. A man in an electric wheelchair slowly tracks along the perimeter of the room, squinting as he makes a screen rectangle with his fingers, muttering camera directions. He pans across Rex, then tilts and zooms up and down on him.

FINGER DIRECTOR

Lose the hat, stretch!

Rex takes off his hat and sighs. Suddenly, he notices one of the residents watching TV. He approaches, staring intently.

REX

Scotty? Scotty Malloy?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

It's Rex. Rex Masters. We worked together in the "Black Sedan" serial!

SCOTTY

No. You worked with Peter Lorre and stood in my light.

REX

I beg your pardon?

SCOTTY

Episode three. Mugsy's Bar scene. I was Man in Booth with Umbrella. You stood in my light, cast a shadow right over me. In the final cut, I was Hand in Booth With Umbrella.

REX

Oh. I, uh -

SCOTTY

I was up for that Inspector Walters part, but you got it for being taller.

REX

Well, excuse me for growing.

SCOTTY

Hmpf. Rex Masters.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

HESTER

Thinks he's hot stuff cause he had
thirty seconds of screen time with
Bogey.

REX

And you would be?

HESTER

Hester White.

REX

Hester White? From the "Dormitory
Debutantes"?

HESTER

That's right. Voted best family
comedy by the League of Morality for
1934 and 1935. Those morons
wouldn't have known a double
entendre if it kicked them below the
Bible belt.

REX

And what have you done since then?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

HESTER

Practically nothing! Nobody would hire me after I turned 16 because I wasn't cute anymore! But you wouldn't understand that, would you? Rex Masters, legendary Hollywood ladies man!

REX

Not at all, my dear. I understand perfectly that you're not cute anymore.

BUDDY

(standing, shaking Rex's hand) Hey, there, Rex! Buddy Jackson. Buddy G. Jackson. Remember me?

REX

Buddy G. Jackson? No. No, I'm sorry, I can't place you.

BUDDY

Hmm. How about now. (hostily shouting) Yous a-wait here, boss, while I's bring da car 'round! Yassur! Yassur! Dinnar is a-served, sur! Lawdy, da Yankees done and blowed up Vicksburg! (in Rex's face) You remember me now. Huh? Do you, peckerwood!

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"

CONTINUED:

Buddy sits down again. Rex stammers in confusion. Most of group focuses on the TV, pointedly ignoring Rex, but Flora stands and trots up to him, taking his hand.

FLORA

Mr. Masters, I'm Flora Woodward.
You don't know me, but my
girlfriends and I had such a crush
on you when you played Captain
Rawlings in "Mister Tokyo Rose." We
were in the night club number. I
was the middle mermaid in the shell
(she hums and makes a few creaky
dance steps). I've been a fan ever
since. Aren't you dead?

REX

What?

FLORA

Oh, yes. I'm certain I read in
Variety years ago that you had died.

REX

I knew I shouldn't have cancelled my
subscription.

FLORA

Oh, it was so sad. I was
heartbroken.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"

CONTINUED:

Flora starts humming again and dances off toward the windows. Rex looks down at Tony.

REX

How about you.

TONY

Tony Marconi, aka Billy Mahoney, aka Sir Winston Chamberlain III during the blacklisting. I did stage work so I traveled back and forth to New York a lot. I don't think we ever met. (looking up) Though you dated my wife for a while.

REX

All right, then. Well, it's been lovely meeting you all. If you'll excuse me, I have to go back across the River Styx now.

Rex exits through the main doorway to the hall.

CUT TO:

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT ONE

SCENE C

INT. HALLWAY - DAY (CONTINUED)
(REX, MAIRE)

REX AND MARIE MEET IN THE HALLWAY, JUST OUTSIDE THE DAYROOM.

REX

OK. Get me out of here.

MARIE

Hold on a minute! What happened.

REX

(pointing through the door) Look at them in there. A bunch of bit players gnawing over the bitter bones of their of washed up glory days. I don't belong here! I've still got a career.

MARIE

Dad, it's been twenty years since you worked on camera.

REX

What about when I was a greeter at the Grammys two years ago?

MARIE

I don't think closed-circuit counts.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

Bobby Goulet recognized me on the monitor.

MARIE

Right. He thought you were the guy who parked his car.

REX

Look, I've got plenty of irons in the fire -

MARIE

No, dad. You don't. What you've got are new dental implants, hair plugs, Botox, ear pinning, liposuction, and a spray on tan that you've spent almost everything you had to get. This is the only place you can afford to live now.

REX

But why can't I stay with you?

MARIE

We've been over this. Since the divorce, I don't have the house anymore. The condo is barely big enough for me and Jacqueline.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

And what about Jacqueline? She wants to be an actress. She needs the advice of her granddad.

MARIE

No, dad, she doesn't! What she needs to do is finish school, get her degree, and not have her head filled with nonsense at every turn! I don't want you to be unhappy, but you've got to accept that this is where you've come to in life. Now please, just try to give it a chance. I've got to get to work. I'll be back at the end of the day, okay?

REX

Fine. You go. Just send me back in there to suffocate in that must of 50-year vintage flop sweat. (sniffs in the doorway) Hmpf. What is that smell away?

MARIE

(sniffs) Depends.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

On what?

Marie just looks at him and cocks an eyebrow. After a moment, Rex crinkles his nose in disgust. He shakes his head with resignation and slowly goes back into the dayroom. Marie sighs, then turns and walks down the hall.

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE D

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)

(REX, SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, HESTER, GARRETT)

REX RETURNS TO DAYROOM AND SITS AT A TABLE BY A WINDOW, FAR AWAY FROM THE REST OF THE GROUP, STILL WATCHING TV. HE STARES OUT THE WINDOW, LOST IN THOUGHT.

GARRETT

You're in my zone.

Rex turns to see GARRETT, a twelve-year old boy, standing next to him holding a laptop computer and assorted high-tech gadgets.

REX

Excuse me?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

GARRETT

That spot is the only place in the building that gets a strong signal on the wi-fi, 3G, and GPS.

REX

For the sake of civility, I'll assume what you just said makes some kind sense and that it means you want me to move.

Rex stands and offers Garrett his chair. Garrett sits without a word, sets up his equipment and starts typing.

REX

Do you mind if I sit over here.

GARRETT

(typing, not looking up) You got a pacemaker?

REX

No.

GARRETT

All right. You should be cool then.

REX.

Thanks, daddy-o.

Rex sits across the table from Garrett. Suddenly, Garrett's cellphone vibrates loudly and blasts a hip-hop ringtone. Rex covers his heart with his hands, as if he fears radiation from the phone. Garrett picks it up.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

GARRETT.

Yo. (pause) Yo. (pause) Yo.
(pause) Sweeee-eet.

Garrett hangs up and resumes typing. Rex watches him.

REX

Retired child star?

GARRETT

No. My mom drops me off here
sometimes when the maid's out of
town. Or when she has an audition.
Or a migraine. That's my great
uncle over there.

REX

Which one?

Garrett gets up and walks over to stand next to Scotty.

GARRETT

Hi, Uncle Scotty.

Scotty mumbles something, but still focuses on TV.
Garrett leans right in front of his face and waves.

GARRETT

Hell-lo, Un-cle Scot-ty.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

SCOTTY

(grunting with irritation and waving
Garrett out of his view) Hey-hey-
hey! E True Hollywood Story!

Garrett returns to laptop and starts typing.

REX

So, it looks like we're both exiles.

GARRETT

(looking up, excited). Awesome!
You play "Exile" too? Though I can
never get past the sentinels in the
landing bay.

REX

Well, you just have to know how to
talk to them.

GARRETT

I usually use the plasma rifle, but
I think I'm going to try the rocket
launcher next time.

REX

Oh, by all means. Be daring.

GARRETT

Sweet.

Garrett's phone rings again. He answers and starts
talking in hip-hop patter. Rex rolls his eyes and turns
to the window.

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT ONE

SCENE E

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)

(SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, HESTER, NURSE RACHEL)

NURSE RACHEL ENTERS AND GOES UP TO THE MAIN GROUP AT THE TV. SHE HOVERS ABOUT THEM, FLUFFING PILLOWS AND CHECKING PULSES AS THEY TWITCH HER AWAY.

NURSE RACHEL

Good morning everyone. Another beautiful day at Desmond Hills, huh? How we all doing today?

BUDDY

My knee hurts.

TONY

It's freezing in here.

SCOTTY

I can't drink the grapefruit juice, it's too acidic.

FLORA

The man in 15G didn't come to breakfast today. Someone should check on him.

NURSE RACHEL

Hold on now! One at a time. (To Scotty) What about you, Mr. Malloy? How's that new hip coming along? Is it feeling any better today?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

SCOTTY

My hip? Oh, never better, lassie.
Never better.

NURSE RACHEL

That's wonderful. (To Hester) And
how about you, honey? How's that
pain in your backside you mentioned
yesterday?

HESTER

It didn't bother me overnight, but
it's come back this morning.

NURSE RACHEL

Oh, how awful! Can I get you a
pillow or something?

HESTER

If you go to get something, I'm sure
it'll be better.

NURSE RACHEL

Can do. I'll get that for you in a
minute.

HESTER

Thanks, honey. You're a pill.

NURSE RACHEL

Now, Mr. Jackson, I watched you
having a bagel with cream cheese at
breakfast this morning.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

BUDDY

You have got to get a hobby.
Crossword puzzles are nice.

NURSE RACHEL

You know you have to watch your
cholesterol. Make sure you get the
spread without trans-fatty acids.
Just look for the "no trans fat"
sticker. Remember trans fat is bad.

BUDDY

What's so bad about trans fat?

TONY

Well, if there's anything worse than
a guy in a dress, it's one without
the figure to pull it off.

NURSE RACHEL

(To Tony) Mr. Marconi, did you do
your exercises yesterday?

TONY

I tried, but I kept forgetting how
they go. Could you show me again.

NURSE RACHEL

OK. Now watch me.

She places her hands together and closes her eyes.
Slowly, she stretches her arms upward and takes a deep
breath, her chest swelling. The men stare enthralled.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

NURSE RACHEL

You breathe in and reach. Then
breathe out and relax.

She makes slow, wide circles with her arms, eyes closed,
chest out the whole time. She repeats the motion.

Breath in and reach. Out and relax.
In and out. Reach and relax. Okay?
Can you remember that?

TONY

Oh, I promise I'll remember that to
my dying day.

NURSE RACHEL

Great. Now I hope you'll all come
to my exercise class later today.

TONY

Absolutely.

BUDDY

Wouldn't miss it.

SCOTTY

Wild horses couldn't keep us away.

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT ONE

SCENE F

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)
(REX, NURSE RACHEL)

NURSE RACHEL MEETS REX.

NURSE RACHEL

Why, hello there. You're new around here.

REX

(standing and bowing) Rex Masters, my dear.

NURSE RACHEL

Hi. I'm Nurse Rachel, Mr. Masters -

REX

Please call me Rex. (kissing her hand) A genuine pleasure, Rachel.

NURSE RACHEL

Aren't you sweet. And handsome, too.

REX

Only because I bask in the glow of your beauty, Rachel. You know, I feel must apologize for the rudeness of the others.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

NURSE RACHEL

Oh, them? There just a bunch of old cards being silly.

REX

It is a testament to your inner beauty as well that you bear such boorishness with grace.

NURSE RACHEL

(almost blushing) Well, you are quite the charmer.

REX

Ah, Rachel, it has been some time since I've felt moved enough to be charming.

NURSE RACHEL

Oh, you poor thing! (drawing close, speaking low) You know, I have something that I think can help you feel moved. Shall I come back later when it's a little more private?

REX

Nothing could please me more (kissing her hand again). Till then.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

NURSE RACHEL

Don't worry. I won't forget you.

Nurse Rachel exits the dayroom. Rex smiles, smoothes his hair, and straightens his tie. He notices the group watching TV staring at him. He shrugs with mock sheepishness then sits down.

GARRETT

Yo. That was smooth, dawg!

REX

Just go play with your rocket
launcher, son.

ACT ONE

SCENE G

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)

(SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, HESTER, TONY, DIRECTOR JONES, DIRK
WEAVER)

ENTER DIRECTOR JONES LEADING DIRK WEAVER, A WEASLY
LOOKING YOUNG MAN.

DIRK

So all these folks here are old
movie stars?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRECTOR JONES

Well, most were actors. A few
directors. Some stagehands and
laborers.

DIRK

Any writers?

DIRECTOR JONES

I don't believe so. In my
experience, they don't seem to have
any idea when it's time to retire.

DIRK

So I can talk to these guys?

DIRECTOR JONES

Of course. Allow me to introduce
you. Excuse me everyone. This young
man would like to have a word with
you, so please give him your
undivided attention.

Director Jones fits in his earbuds and fiddles with his
iPod as he quickly leaves the room. Dirk stands alone
for a moment, then pulls up a chair and sits in the midst
of the group watching TV.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRK

(To Hester, who ignores him.) Hi.
(Extending his hand to Buddy.) Hi,
I'm Dirk Weav -

Buddy hangs his cane on Dirk's outstretched arm. He moans and grunts as he shifts in his chair and adjusts his pants. Finally, settling to a comfortable position with a sigh, he retrieves his cane from Dirk's arm.

BUDDY

Thanks, boy.

Dirk gets up and turns off the TV. Moans and grumbling all around.

DIRK

(over the noise) Allow me to
introduce myself. My name is Dirk
Weaver, and I'm a writer with
Edutainment-slash-Infomatics-dot-com.
It might be of interest to you that
I'm working on a series of articles,
which I plan to turn into a book,
about Hollywood's Golden Age.

TONY

Really? When's it supposed to
happen?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRK

That's a good one, sir. (sitting
next to Tony) And who might you be?

TONY

I might be the guy who fitted your
mother for army boots.

BUDDY

More likely cement shoes.

DIRK

(chuckling) Oh, you guys are live
ones. This is what I need for my
book. Stories from sharp-witted old
timers to help me the dig up the
dirt on classic Hollywood.

TONY

Son, you don't have to dig to find
dirt in this town. You can scrape
as much as you want right off the
surface. For example, I played a
radio operator in "Heroes Die Alone"
while the lead went to some little
fancy boy the producer was noodling.
Kid had zero talent. If he wet
himself, he couldn't have looked
embarrassed convincingly.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRK

I see. Well, that's -

TONY

Same kid, six months later, marries
some countess and is never heard
from again. You tell me, huh?

DIRK

(confused) Tell you what?

TONY

Exactly.

DIRK

Folks, what I'm really looking for
is -

BUDDY

You want dirt? I can give you dirt.
I heard back-stabbing, double-
dealing stuff you wouldn't believe.
I used to go to all the big parties
on private yachts, country clubs,
political fundraisers at the state
house -

SCOTTY

Wait a minute! How could you get
into all those places?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

BUDDY

I'd just drape a white towel over my arm and they'd let me in the backdoor of anywhere.

DIRK

Guys, while this is all very interesting, what I really want are stories about the big stars, not the bit players.

The group sits in silence. All eyes slowly turn to Dirk.

SCOTTY

Oh, I see.

HESTER

He wants stuff on the big stars.

BUDDY

Yep. Big stars.

TONY

Not the bit players.

BUDDY

Nope. No bit players.

SCOTTY

Big stars only.

TONY

Big stars.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

FLORA

Like who?

DIRK

Well, um. Like, uh, Cary Grant.

FLORA

Ooh! Cary Grant.

TONY

Oh, yeah. Cary Grant.

HESTER

Big star. Very talented.

BUDDY

Handsome.

SCOTTY

Witty.

HESTER

Charming.

TONY

Polite.

HESTER

Gay.

DIRK

What?

TONY

Oh yeah. Totally fancy.

SCOTTY

All the way.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

HESTER

That closet had it's own zip code.

DIRK

Are you putting me on?

SCOTTY

No.

TONY

Never.

BUDDY

Why would us bit players lie?

HESTER

My hand to God. Go ask him.

DIRK

Well, he is dead you know.

TONY

Really?

SCOTTY

When did that happen?

DIRK

A while ago. Sometime in the 80's.

FLORA

I think I remember reading about it.

TONY

That's so sad.

BUDDY

What a loss.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

SCOTTY

God rest his soul.

HESTER

The old queen.

DIRK

(making notes) Whoa! This is big.
What else? How about, say, Grace
Kelly?

FLORA

So beautiful!

SCOTTY

Stunning.

HESTER

Elegant.

TONY

Generous.

BUDDY

And she loved to ride the zebra...
if you know what I mean.

He takes Hester's hand and interlaces his fingers with hers so that Dirk sees clearly.

HESTER

(giggling) Oh, you!

DIRK

No way!

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

BUDDY

Same as her coffee.

DIRK

Oh, man. I smell Pulitzer! What
else you got?

CUT TO:

ACT ONE

SCENE H

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)
(REX, GARRETT, FLORA)

REX and GARRETT SIT AT THEIR TABLE BY THE WINDOW. REX
WATCHES THE GROUP WITH DIRK. GARRETT TYPES AWAY
INDIFFERENTLY.

REX

Look at them all. Fawning all over
some bush league reporter, like any
amount of publicity could revive
their careers. Where did he say he
was from anyway?

GARRETT

Edutainment/Infomatics.com. It
sucks. Google page ranking 2. They
don't even have an RSS feed.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

The scoundrels!

Flora shuffles over to Rex excitedly.

FLORA

Rex! Rex, did you know that Cary
Grant is dead, too?

REX

Oh, the poor fellow! I'll have to
give him my condolences next time I
see him. (thoughtfully, to himself)
The great ones are all but gone from
this world. And we shall never see
their like again. When did he pass?

GARRETT

1986.

REX

How do you know?

GARRETT

I just looked it up on the Internet.

FLORA

Ooh, the Internet. So that tells
you when people die?

GARRETT

More or less.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

FLORA

Check Rex. Rex Masters.

REX

Flora, I promise you I'm not dead.

FLORA

Let's just see what the Internet has
to say about it.

GARRETT

Nope. You're alive.

REX

See?

FLORA

Well, that's good news. But who am
I thinking of that's dead?

REX

I wouldn't hazard to guess.

FLORA

Oh, this is just going to bother me
all day now.

GARRETT

Hey, check it out. You got a
fansite.

REX

A what?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

GARRETT

A website, created by a fan of your
movies. It's a pretty good one,
too. Biography. Film lists.
Pictures, even some video. Look.

Garrett spins around the laptop so Rex can see. He
clicks around with the mouse and points out items to Rex.
Rex becomes increasingly excited until he abruptly stands
and grabs Garrett's laptop, brandishing it like the
tablets of the Ten Commandments.

REX

(triumphantly) Hey! Hey, all you
washed-up, diaper-wearing has-beens!
I'm on the Internet!

END OF ACT ONE

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT TWO

SCENE A

INT. DAYROOM - DAY

(REX)

REX IS ON THE PAYPHONE IN THE CORNER OF THE DAYROOM.

REX

I'm telling you, Marie, it's amazing. My entire career cataloged by a fan! Everything I was ever in, with stills and publicity shots - even clips that look like little talking postage stamps. Now how many other actors you think have their own siteweb?

GARRETT (VOICE OVER)

That's WEB-SITE!

REX

Right, right. Website. So how many, do you think? (pause) Really? Huh. Well, I didn't pay anybody to do this, a fan did it, all on their own! (pause) So what if it is a stalker? You're nobody in this town till you have a stalker. The point is I still have an audience out there. I've got to call my agent.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX (CONTINUED)

He did? When? (pause) Oh, that's too bad. Well, how about his son, is he in the business? (pause) Him too? Man, that's one unlucky family. Anyway, when you come this afternoon, I want you to take me out of this place. I'll get my own apartment. I'll use that trust money I set up for Jacqueline. Once I get work, I'll be able to pay it back triple! (pause) What do you mean? What tax liability? So I can't use that money while I'm still alive? How am I supposed to know that. (pause) Well, I'm sorry, I've never died before, so I'm not on up the best practices! Look, we'll talk about it when you come. You tell Jacqueline that I have a website. In fact, bring her along tonight, I want to show it to her myself! (pause) Please. I haven't seen her in weeks. Bring her along, OK. OK? Hello? Marie? Marie!

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

Rex hangs up, looking dejected.

CUT TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE B

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)
(REX, SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, HESTER, GARRETT,
ORDERLY, FINGER DIRECTOR)

SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, AND HESTER ARE NOW SEATED IN
A GROUP AROUND GARRETT, IN ALMOST THE SAME CONFIGURATION
THEY WERE PREVIOUSLY CLUSTERED AROUND THE TV. REX HANGS
UP THE PHONE IN THE BACKGROUND AND WALKS UP TO STAND
BEHIND THE GROUP.

SCOTTY

How about Jimmy Stewart?

GARRETT

(types a bit) Died in 1997.

The group moans with collective disappointment, like golf
spectators when a player just misses a crucial putt.

FLORA

So terrible! Such a sweet man.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

TONY

Such fantastic work. I swear I
could almost see that rabbit.

BUDDY

Had he run for office he'd have been
the only white man I'd ever vote
for!

HESTER

He was a jewel. Though, that
stammering got old after a while.

SCOTTY

Seriously. (perfect Jimmy Stewart
imitation) You wished, that, that
sometimes he would ju-just go ahead
and spit it out, instead of all that
hemming and hawing and whatnot and
soforth.

HESTER

(to Tony) You owe me your fruit
cup.

TONY

All right, hold on. I'll double-or-
nothing you with my yogurt.

HESTER

Go ahead. It's your funeral.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

TONY

(to Garrett) Jack Lemmon.

GARRETT

(types a bit) 2001.

Again, the collective moan.

TONY

Damn it!

SCOTTY

I was a conductor in "Some Like in Hot." I tell you, the camera didn't do him justice. He looked good, and next to Marilyn, that was no small trick. Now Tony was just incredible. From the backside, the crew whistled at him every day. Oh, he got such a charge out of it, we all started to wonder.

TONY

(to Garrett) Oh, Tony Curtis! What about Tony Curtis.

GARRETT

(types a bit) He's alive.

TONY

Yes! (pointing at Hester) In your face!

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

HESTER

No, no! I never agreed to that one.

FLORA

Ooh, I've got one! (to Garrett)

Ronald Reagan!

The whole group just looks at Flora.

FLORA

I remember reading about him being
governor or something.

BUDDY

Flora, he was the president.

FLORA

Of SAG?

BUDDY

President of the United States.

FLORA

Really? Oh, good for him.

TONY

Boy, I can remember being so proud.
Seeing one of our own as president.

HESTER

He had such a presence. You'd just
look at him and you'd feel like
everything was going to be OK.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

BUDDY

It's true.

SCOTTY

Absolutely.

HESTER

And the things he said. (pause)
Never made a lick of sense.

TONY

Oh, it was all gibberish.

BUDDY

Rhetorical nonsense.

SCOTTY

(perfect Reagan imitation). It's
morning in America. What the hell
does that mean? Nothing.
Absolutely nothing. He was all
about the hair.

BUDDY

Just the idea that your hair could
stay the same for 40 years was
inspiring in itself.

TONY

I tell you he probably had a
separate deal with the Saudis for
the oil supply for his head.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

(cutting in) All right, enough of
this, you ghouls. Turn back to my
website.

The whole group protests loudly.

HESTER

For God's sake, not again!

BUDDY

Give it a rest, would you!

SCOTTY

What do you want us to do, memorize
it?

Despite their protests, they gather in closer to see.

TONY

(squinting at screen and maneuvering
his glasses like a zoom) Irving
Weissberg? That's your real name?

REX

Born and raised with it.

TONY

I didn't know you were a closet
Hebrewite. I always had you pegged
for half a Limey or something.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

Precisely in accordance with my
plans.

HESTER

Did you know Mort Henkelstein?

REX

Mort Henkelstein? Henkelstein?
Hmm... I don't think so. Oh, wait a
minute! I believe I met him once at
the Wailing Wall.

Enter a white-shirted ORDERLY.

ORDERLY

Everyone, lunch is served. Lunch is
now ready in the dining hall.

All residents in dayroom begin a mumbling, shuffling mass
exodus through the main doorway. The orderly threads his
way through the crowd and stops Rex.

ORDERLY

Are you (looks at a paper slip) Rex
Masters?

REX

Yes, I am young man.

ORDERLY

I have something for you from Nurse
Rachel.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

(beaming) Really? By all means,
please deliver, my good man.

ORDERLY

OK.

The orderly reaches into a discreet white paper bag and holds up an enema package.

ORDERLY

She, uh, said you were having some
trouble, you know, moving.

REX

(indignant) What the - ? I never -
! She - ! I don't need that, I've
got a website! Get that away from
me!

FINGER DIRECTOR

(seated in corner) Hey! (whistles)
Hey, ace! I'll take that. Bring it
right on over hear.

Rex stomps out in a huff. Orderly walks over toward Finger Director who tracks him carefully, squinting through his finger-frame.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

FINGER DIRECTOR

Slowly! Slowly. Hold it out. Set it on the table. Right in the sunbeam. Easy. (zooming on enema package) Turn it toward me. Hand away - slowly! That's it. That's it. And... we're out!

Finger Director grabs the box, and motors out of the room on his whirring electric wheelchair.

ACT TWO

SCENE C

INT. DAYROOM - DAY (CONTINUED)
(FLORA, TONY, GARRETT)

DAYROOM IS EMPTY EXCEPT FOR GARRETT, STILL AT HIS COMPUTER, AS TONY WATCHES HIM INTENTLY. FLORA DANCES BY THE SUNNY WINDOWS, QUIETLY HUMMING MELODIES TO HERSELF.

TONY

(to Garrett) So, that Internet thing. Pretty amazing, huh?

GARRETT

(typing, not looking up) Yeah, it's pretty cool.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

TONY

So, how do you look that stuff up?

GARRETT

It's easy. You just click this icon here. That launches the search engine, then you type in what you want to know in this box here, and hit Go.

TONY

(watching very carefully) Wow. That's just amazing. Technology, you know. Wow. (thinking for a moment) Hey, you know it's free ice cream day in the dining hall. Yeah, it's, uh, make your own Sunday Tuesday.

GARRETT

(typing, not looking up) Uh-huh.

TONY

Yeah, they set up a whole table with different flavors and a softee machine. All kinds of sprinkles and hot fudge and nuts and whipped cream and stuff. As much as you want.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

GARRETT

(typing, not looking up) Cool.

TONY

Yeah. Very cool. (looking frustrated, thinking again) And then, uh, afterward, Nurse Rachel gives her exercise class in the dance room.

GARRETT

(looking up) Really? Where?

TONY

Right down the hall, next to the dining room. Oh, yeah, it's great. She puts on these little tights and lies on the floor. Lifts her legs way up. Bends herself like a pretzel with that yoga stuff she does. It's something.

GARRETT

Awesome!

TONY

Oh yeah. As a matter of fact (leans close and speaks low) today she said she was going to demonstrate the proper technique for kundalini.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

GARRETT

No way!

TONY

Yes way. Check it out. You might learn something that will come in useful someday (he winks big). Go ahead. I'll keep an eye on your stuff. Make sure nobody touches it.

GARRETT

Awesome. Thanks!

Garrett bolts out of the room. Tony watches to make sure he's gone, then hurries over to his computer. He has to take off his glasses and zoom them in and out alternately on the screen then keyboard to see. He moves the mouse uncertainly and clicks. Holding his glasses in one hand, he hunts and pecks on the keys with a finger.

TONY

What the - ! What is this? The damn letters aren't in alphabetical order! How is anybody supposed to use this stupid thing?!

Flora waltzes up.

FLORA

May I?

Tony throws up his hands in frustration. Flora sits down, hands over the keyboard.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

FLORA

What do you want.

TONY

Type my name in there.

FLORA

Which one?

TONY

The main one! Marconi! M-A-R-C -

Before he finishes, Flora's fingers tap it out in a blur.

TONY

How do you know how to do that?

FLORA

I worked as a secretary in the War Department. (salutes) We all had to do our part to defeat Jerry Hirohito, you know. I'll never forget how to use the teletype, though I've lost most of the Navajo.

TONY

(looking at the screen) OK. No, that's not me. Go down. No. Keep going down. Go down. For the love of God, after all these years, why does that radio guy still get all this press! Try the Irish name!

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"

CONTINUED:

Flora types some more and they both examine the results.

FLORA

Any of these you?

TONY

No. Try the English one.

Again, Flora types and they examine.

FLORA

Ooh! Is that your castle?

TONY

Damn it! Where's my fansite! I slogged away on stage and screen for almost forty years - singing, dancing, comic parts, dramatic roles. Hitchcock once called me the best "Man With Newspaper" in the business! The secret was the fluff-and-fold. I do that in the background and you never see the bad guy draw the gun. That's a pivotal role!

FLORA

I'm sorry, hun. Maybe they're going alphabetically and haven't got to you yet.

He storms out, disgusted. Flora gets up and follows him, humming a tune.

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT TWO

SCENE D

INT. DAYROOM - AFTERNOON (CONTINUED)
(REX, GARRETT)

REX ENTERS EMPTY DAYROOM, LOOKS AROUND. A FEW MOMENTS LATER GARRETT, ENTERS. REX GREETES HIM ENTHUSIASTICALLY.

REX

Ah, there you are, my boy! Where were you?

GARRETT

I went to watch Nurse Rachel's exercise class.

REX

Oh? How was it?

GARRETT

A bunch of old people limping around to "Who Let the Dogs Out."

REX

Well, exercise is rarely pretty when performed by those who actually need it. So tell me something, can you find out who made that website of mine?

GARRETT

Sure.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

He sits at his computer and starts typing. He clicks around and frowns.

GARRETT

There's no webmaster listed. Should I do a WHOIS on the domain registrar?

REX

Explain that as if speaking to someone from Medieval Portugal.

GARRETT

That Internet address up there. We can find out who registered it. (types a bit more) Got it. Name and phone number right here.

REX

Can call them on that little musical phone of yours?

GARRETT

No problem. (dials then hands phone to Rex) Here.

REX

(taking the phone) What's that?

GARRETT

The video screen. It's a picture phone.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"

CONTINUED:

REX

Ooh! You mean when I'm talking to
someone we'll see each other!

Rex holds up the phone like a mirror and adjusts his hair
and practices smiling.

GARRETT

No, you won't be able to see.

REX

Well, how about I go over here,
where the light's better?

GARRETT

It doesn't work like that!

He pushes the phone up to Rex's ear. Rex listens.
Meanwhile, the rest of the group has returned one-by-one
from lunch and are now gathering around Rex in curiosity.

REX

(to the group) Just calling a fan.
(into the phone) Hello? Yes, I was
trying to reach Warren Spellman.
It's in regard to a website he
published, a fansite for the classic
movie actor Rex Masters. (pause)
Yes, that's right. Really? Well,
it certainly shows. (Covering phone
with hand, to group) She says it
was a labor of love.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

He buffs his fingernails on his jacket lapel.

REX

(into phone) Me? Ma'am my name is... Rex Masters. Yes, really! I've just discovered the site and I think it's wonderful, and I just wanted to thank the man in person who did such a lovely job cataloging my career. What's that? Oh. Oh. I see. Yes. Of course. Well, it was a thrill to talk to you, too. Thank you very much. Goodbye.

Rex slowly closes the phone and hands it back to Garrett. The whole group hovers around him with an air of expectation. Rex sits down heavily.

REX

Died in 2002.

As one, the group moans disappointment.

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT TWO

SCENE E

INT. DAYROOM - AFTERNOON (CONTINUED)

(REX, SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, HESTER, GARRETT, DIRK WEAVER)

REX SITS STARING OUT THE WINDOW DEJECTEDLY. GARRETT TYPES, AND THE REST OF THE GROUP WATCHES TV. DIRK WEAVER ENTERS IN A HUFF AND TROMPS UP TO THE TV, SWITCHING IT OFF AS THE GROUP PROTESTS.

DIRK

Excuse me, but I'd like a word with you people.

HESTER

What's the matter, sonny? You need some more material? We got lots more.

BUDDY

Oh yeah. Tons.

SCOTTY

Bucketfuls of it.

FLORA

I have one! I'll never forget the time I heard Jayne Mansfield say to Mickey Rooney. She said, um, oh, what was it she said...?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRK

Look, I did a little fact-checking on some of the gems you gave me before and found some interesting things.

TONY

Really.

SCOTTY

Do tell, lad!

DIRK

(looking at a notebook) OK, then. Well, it turns out that there's no corroboration anywhere that Cary Grant was ever homosexual.

HESTER

No!

BUDDY

What a shocker!

TONY

Well, fancy that.

DIRK

Nor was Grace Kelly ever known to have an interracial affair.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

BUDDY

Heavens, but that would have been quite scandalous for the day.

DIRK

Also, it turns out the original title for "Casablanca" was not "The Nazi Professor." Cyd Charrise did not have a sex change and become Sid Ceasar. And Imogene Coca did not invent any beverage of any kind.

The group snickers, then erupts into serious laughter

DIRK

Ha-ha. Very funny. It must be nice, to just sit here as the world passes you by, fading a little more every day. This is my livelihood, people! I'm just trying to make a living and you bitter, old, small-time has-beens get your kicks out of messing with me!

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

(standing) Young man, we may be bitter, old, has-beens – but at least we were! Look at yourself. Half a century after the fact you're sniffing around for any scraps of the "golden age" we lived through. Maybe we weren't the legends of our generation, but we were privileged to stand close to them – and there aren't many of us left. We were there when a new medium helped changed the world through a depression and a war and years when the fate of this country seemed to hang by a thread. We fought enemies overseas and came home to find our friends persecuted by paranoia. And if nothing else, you should have the wits to recognize that we have been in your position – young, arrogant, trying to get ahead – but you have not yet been in ours. If nothing else, you should have some respect for that simple fact.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

DIRK

That's a nice speech, pop. It's just too bad nobody outside this room will ever hear it, since I'm sure as hell not going to quote any of you. Have a nice life, folks.

Dirk leaves. Rex shrugs sullenly and sits down as the group just looks at him. Suddenly, Flora bolts up.

FLORA

Ooh! I just remembered what Jayne Mansfield said to Mickey Rooney! (calling into the hallway) She said, "Get the hell away from me, you annoying little turd!"

DISSOLVE TO:

ACT TWO

SCENE F

INT. DAYROOM - EARLY EVENING
(REX, MARIE, JACQUELINE)

REX STARES OUT THE WINDOW JUST AS BEFORE, BUT GARRETT IS GONE. THE GROUP WATCHES TV AS ALWAYS. MARIE ENTERS WITH A FOLDER.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

MARIE

Hi, dad.

REX

Good evening.

REX

So how'd things go today?

REX

Glorious. Pretty much as I should
have expected. Are those my
commitment papers?

MARIE

Dad, you're not being committed.
It's just -

REX

Relax. I'll sign, whatever you
want. I see that I belong here now.

MARIE

(putting the papers before him)
It's for the best, dad.

REX

Sure.

He takes a pen from Marie and signs in all the assorted
spots she points to.

REX

There. Is it done?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

MARIE

That's it.

REX

I notice that Jacqueline isn't here with you.

MARIE

Well, no, she had to go -

REX

Of course, of course. I understand perfectly. You pack me away here, and withhold my granddaughter from me. It's perfect. I'm taken care of and not a problem to you anymore.

MARIE

A problem? Dad, you were never a problem to me. In fact, you were never much of anything to me. If you recall, you left mom when I was four years old. For years, I just thought of you as a tall figure whose face I couldn't remember.

REX

That's not true! I came to see you as often as I could. On your birthdays and Christmas -

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

MARIE

Which ones, Dad? They did happen every year. But I didn't see you on many. And I waited. I waited and hoped at each one, because, damn it, you are one charming son of a bitch. A smile or a joke or piggyback from you was enough to keep me dreaming of my wonderful daddy for years. That is, until I got old enough to read the tabloids and see the parade of starlets you constantly attached yourself to. I couldn't understand why you liked them better than mom. Or me. And as you got older, and the starlets got younger, it only got harder for me to understand. Still, I kept dreaming you'd come back, you'd settle down and come home to me. Then I got too old to dream. And here we are. But I'm not angry. I'm not bitter. If I were bitter and angry I might say that a place like this is better than you deserve. But I would never say that. No, dad, I would never say that.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

Marie turns away, overcome. She stares out the window, breathing deeply. Rex falters. He reaches out to touch her, but can't bring himself to. He sinks back into his chair and buries his face in his hands.

JACQUELINE enters.

JACQUELINE

There you are, mom! I got the photo album I left in the car. (noticing her mother's emotion) Mom? Mom, what's wrong?

MARIE

I'm fine. I'm just tired. I think need a cup of coffee. (pointing to Rex) You go on, honey. You're grandfather's waiting.

Jacqueline hesitates. Marie touches her arm and smiles. She turns her gently toward Rex, then walks out into the hall. Jacqueline goes to Rex, kneeling beside his chair.

JACQUELINE

Grandpa? Are you OK?

REX

Oh, I'm... never better. Never better, sweetheart. (brightening) So how's my beautiful granddaughter! Is that your portfolio?

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

JACQUELINE

It's just some photos from my stage workshop.

REX

Let me see! (looking through the book). Is that you?

JACQUELINE

Uh-huh!

REX

You were in "My Fair Lady?"

JACQUELINE

Well, it was a showcase. We all got to play a bunch of parts.

REX

Still, Eliza Doolittle is nothing to sneeze at. (singing) "I could have danced all night! I could have danced all night!"

Rex stands, taking Jacqueline's hand. She stands with him and they sing and dance together.

DISSOLVE TO:

"Rex Settles Down"

ACT TWO

SCENE G

INT. DAYROOM - EVENING (LATER)

(REX, BUDDY, FLORA, SCOTTY, TONY, HESTER)

REX, SCOTTY, BUDDY, FLORA, TONY, and HESTER ARE ALL SITTING, WATCHING TV.

SCOTTY

Look at these movie actors today,
making twenty million dollars a
picture. It's outrageous.

TONY

They haggle for months over a
quarter percent of box office gross.

BUDDY

And what about the TV ones.
Renegotiating their contracts after
every season.

FLORA

Staging walkouts. Sick outs.

HESTER

Demanding merchandizing residuals.

SCOTTY

They just don't care about the work
the way we did.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

REX

That's right. All we cared about
was the work.

FLORA

We just wanted to make a good
picture. Something people could
enjoy.

BUDDY

Something we could be proud of.

TONY

Something we could show to our
grandkids and say that's me up
there.

FLORA

We worked with the directors.

HESTER

Anything they asked.

REX

We did whatever the studio needed us
to do.

TONY

Bit parts. Crowd scenes. Stunt
doubles.

REX

Being loaned out to other studios
for uncredited walk-ons.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

FLORA

Chorus girls at supper clubs.

HESTER

Serving drinks at the Christmas
party.

TONY

And we were happy for it. Happy for
the work.

FLORA

Happy to be part of the magic of
Hollywood.

SCOTTY

And we never grumbled about money.
We never banded together to try to
strong arm for a cut of the profits.

BUDDY

No we didn't.

FLORA

Never.

REX

Not once.

They all sit in a silent pause for a moment or two.

TONY

We were idiots.

(CONTINUED)

"Rex Settles Down"
CONTINUED:

SCOTTY

Oh, complete morons.

BUDDY

Slaves. We were a notch above
slaves.

FLORA

Babes in the woods.

HESTER

Sheep. Big, fat, stupid sheep
baring our throats for the wolves.

END OF ACT TWO

FADE OUT