

A smattering of CHAIRS, randomly arranged, sit empty in a darkened rehearsal space. A shadow appears in the doorframe. The door opens to reveal JACQUES, a short, athletic-looking man in his 50s carrying a small brown SACK.

Jacques steps in, surveying the room. He tosses down the sack and begins to stretch his body, contorting himself into a few expressive poses and making his way through the random arrangement of chairs.

Once he is finished with his stretches, he begins picking up chairs, arranging them in a semicircle. Once he is finished with this, he sits down in a chair facing the door and begins contorting his face. He oscillates between different varieties of smiles and frowns before settling into his normal, disappointed-looking expression.

Jacques clears his throat and reaches back into the sack, pulling out a small RED CLOWN NOSE attached to a string. With worn, battered hands, he dons the nose and checks his WATCH, then looks up at the empty room.

At the door, another shadow appears, this one slighter. The doorknob turns, and in walks LEO, an emaciated-looking young man. He lingers by the door for a second, staring at Jacques. Jacques stares too, and eventually gestures at him to come closer. Leo does, and takes a seat at the far end of the circle.

LEO

I'm sorry. Am I early?

Jacques takes an exaggerated look at his watch.

JACQUES

Late.

LEO

I-I'm sorry. I made up my mind a bit last minute and-

JACQUES

Why so far away?

LEO

Didn't want to seem like a teacher's pet, I guess.

Jacques spreads his hands out, gesturing at the empty chairs.

JACQUES

Only pet, so far.

Leo laughs, but it quickly tapers off into an awkward silence.

JACQUES (CONT'D)  
First time?

LEO  
Acting?

Jacques nods impatiently.

LEO (CONT'D)  
Some stuff here and there. Long time ago. Wanted to try something new.

Jacques stands up and begins to drag his chair across the circle. Halfway to Leo, he pauses and gestures (quite theatrically) with one hand for Leo to wait. The clown takes his hand, balls it into a fist, and holds it up to his mouth, and begins to let out a hacking, phlegm-infused cough. Leo sits with a deadpan expression, not surprised or shocked, but indifferent. The clown continues for an awkward few beats, sitting down on the chair as he does. Eventually, he gets his bearings and gets up, continuing to drag the chair over to Leo.

Still standing Jacques inspects Leo's facial expression. He pokes his fingers into the younger man's face, turning his head this way and that, pulling his ears out, placing his finger in Leo's nose.

LEO (CONT'D)  
What?

In one swift move, Jacques takes a seat and pulls Leo's face towards his own, placing the tip of his tongue on the young man's forehead. Leo recoils. Jacques's gaze is steady.

JACQUES  
Your face, it's timid. Not necessarily something to worry about. But something's missing.

Leo looks silently at Jacques.

LEO  
I haven't done this in a while. Got too in my head about it. Lost the feeling.

Jacques nods his head in recognition.

JACQUES

A classic neurotic case. I  
have just the thing.