

Stage right: Dmitri's home – a sparsely furnished studio apartment

(There is a front door somewhere upstage. Dmitri is talking to a lethargic rat in a makeshift cage on his desk. Stage left is dark.)

Dmitri

(Slavic accent)

Hello, little friend! Is better today? You not look so good before. Too much drink, yes?

Me? I think not enough drink. All on my pants, not... how you say..."down my gullet". All very silly. Silly - what you know about silly? You a rat. Cute rat though. Very cute.

Hungry? Of course hungry. Rats always hungry. I see what I have.

(Dmitri goes to the kitchen area and opens a small fridge to prepare something.)

Is little bit. Is ok, you small – is fine. Hamburger, cheese, pickle, catsup. Sorry, no sesame seed bun. But you make something good with this I'm sure.

(Dmitri brings the ingredients over on a large spoon and plops them in the cage.)

I need name for you. I call you "Rat". Yes, I know, not very clever. Very descriptive though. Yes.

(Rat rousts himself, starts sniffing at the food, and slowly begins to eat it. It's actually quite a bit for a rat. A buzzer buzzes and Dmitri goes to the wall and pushes a button, then goes back to the cage.)

Ok, my friend Rat. Is time for me to go. Have a good breakfast, see you tonight!

(There is a doorbell ding. Dmitri puts on a light jacket and answers the door. It's Angie)

Angie

Ready?

Dmitri

How you say... "Let's go!"

(Dmitri and Angie exit and the lights go down on Dmitri's apartment. Lights come up stage left, showing:)

Stage left: The Mayor's office. Nice but older furnishings.

(Rob, the mayor, is pacing back and forth. Dweezel tries to calm him down.)

Dweezel

I'm not saying it's happening. I'm not even saying it's a thing. I'm only asking questions.

Rob

Questions like that I don't like. If something's going on, I need to know about it.

Dweezel

Something like what?

Rob

Like... like what you said.

Dweezel

I didn't say anything.

Rob

Of course not. And I didn't hear anything.

(Angie and Dmitri enter)

Ah, there you are. Come on in.

Dmitri

Am already in.

Rob

So you are. Tell me, what do you know about the Ministry of Health?

Dmitri

In my country, Ministry of Health was very powerful Bureau. Many rules, big bureaucracy. Interesting word: bureaucracy. Comes from Greek: **kratos**. Means power.

Angie

You speak Greek too?

Dmitri

Only a little.

Rob

I'm talking about the ministry of health here. The grand opening thing.

Dmitri

Yes, I try to forget. But I have new pet. I call him Rat.

Rob

I'm sure. How did you find out about it?

Dmitri

Same as you. I got a letter.
(*Quinn rushes in*)

Quinn

Sorry I'm late. Did I miss anything.

Rob

Nothing you don't always miss.

Angie

Be nice to my Quinn.

Quinn

"My Qui—" Am I in the right place? And what's Dweezel doing here?

Rob

Did you get a letter?

Quinn

About Dweezel?

Rob

No – about the Ministry of Health.

Quinn

Yeah. We all did. That is, everyone except the Boss. I presume. Because he wasn't there.

Angie

Presumably busy running the steakhouse.

Rob

But was he?

Quinn

I don't know. I wasn't there. I was here. I mean, there. At the reception, not the restaurant.

Rob

Which is where he should have been.

Quinn

I don't know where he should have been. He's the Boss – he's always where he should have been.

Angie

But he's not your boss. He's my boss.

Quinn

He's still the Boss. Even if he's not the boss. You know how that goes. Anyway, what's Dweezel doing here?

Angie

An interesting question has come up, in several different forms, in several different places.

Quinn

And just what might that question be?

Angie

That's the thing we're trying to figure out.

Quinn

The question is what is Dweezel doing here?

Rob

The question is "why that is the question".

Quinn

Because....

(*Quinn stops – he does not have the answer.*)

Rob

There are restaurants opening up left and right all through the mall. Shops are closing with no warning, replaced by restaurants. Letters go out, things happen. And now there's a

ministry of health right under my nose. So... where are all these letters coming from, and why?

Quinn

Well... mine came from Toledo, Ohio.

Rob

Mine too.

Angie

Ditto.

Dmitri

But nobody goes to Toledo, Ohio.

Dweezel

That's the first sensible thing I've heard today.

Rob

There's something about Toledo, Ohio, that's fishy. Quinn, I want you to go find out what it is.

Quinn

Toledo, Ohio?? No. I can't do that again.

Dweezel

Again?

Quinn

That's a six hour flight! You change planes twice and end up in Toledo. I did it once before in my old job – it was a disaster.

Rob

You're gonna get another shot – you and Angie leave tomorrow at six a.m. Find out where those letters are coming from.

Quinn

(sotto voce)

I'm going to kill **somebody**. I just don't know who it is yet.

(Lights fade out on the office, and back up on:

Stage right: Dmitri's apartment

(Dmitri and Angie enter; Dmitri goes straight to his pet rat, Rat's cage.)

Dmitri

How's Rat? Enjoy your day? Oh, you cute rat!

(Dmitri notices something in the rat cage)

Angie – come quick – you not believe this! I gave Rat some food this morning. But not like this – just plop off a spoon.

Angie

Hmm... interesting. Looks something like... I don't know. Something.

Dmitri

Cheese at bottom – like heart shaped.

Angie

Wait - I've seen that before! And the pickle – kinda looks like the sun.

Dmitri

It does, yes with footsteps in catsup giving it nice glow.

Angie

Paw prints. Not footsteps.

Dmitri

Right. Paw prints.

Angie

I think he's saying "Thank you".

Dmitri

That's so sweet. I'm glad you here to see it too. By myself, I think I'm crazy. But no – is real.

Angie

You're not crazy Dmitri. At least not in that way.

Dmitri

Thank you.

Angie

Anyway, gotta go. Gotta pack for Toledo.

(Angie leaves by the front door.)

Dmitri

Thank you too.

(blackout)