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USING OBSTACLES IN SOLO IMPROVISATIONS

The leading characters in a good play or film often need to overcome many difficult obstacles before they can accomplish their objectives. Some of these obstacles may be physical, perhaps involving destructive forces of nature, time limitations, or the interference of others. Others are psychological, perhaps involving deep-seated guilt or hidden fears. Whatever the type, the obstacles help create powerful dramatic tension and excitement.

Each of the one hundred improvisation starters in this chapter provides an obstacle that stands in the way of an objective. The player must find a way to overcome this barrier to her objective. Some obstacles are physical, some are psychological, but all will challenge the player to find a creative solution to his predicament.

The improvisation starters included here are to be performed solo so the player can concentrate on removing his obstruction without the help of another person. This is more difficult to do than improvisation starters for two or more players, as the player must find his own solution to the problem.

These solo improvisations are simple to run. The instructor or moderator should have the player take the stage or playing area and then read the situation aloud to both the player and the audience. The improvisation should then start immediately.

Review the following guidelines before beginning:

- Work on overcoming your obstacle throughout the entire improvisation. Try as many ways as you can think of to do this.

But be warned, you may find yourself in an impossible situation! Keep going until you've overcome your obstacle or your instructor/moderator tells you to stop.

- Don't feel obligated to speak. The improvisation may be performed as a pantomime. Most people don't constantly talk to themselves when they are alone, but some people do like to "think out loud." If thinking out loud helps, then go ahead and do it, but don't do it for the benefit of the audience. If the audience doesn't understand what you're doing, don't worry about it. You can discuss the improvisation with them after it's over.

You may use the following guide questions when discussing the performances with your players and audience:

- How did the player attempt to overcome the obstacle? Was an original approach used?
- Did the player clearly understand the objective?
- What might the player have done differently to overcome the obstacle and accomplish the objective? What do you think you would have done?
- What was the player's attitude toward the obstacle? What was his mood or emotional state?

As in previous chapters, most of the situations do not require gender-specific characters. Feel free to switch male references to female and female references to male.

1. You're driving to a very important job interview, following the directions provided by your car's built-in GPS system. Suddenly, the system unexpectedly shuts down. You have no idea how to get there on your own, and the interview is scheduled to begin very soon.
2. You're cooking a steak dinner for a friend who will arrive shortly. Suddenly, you remember your friend recently decided to follow a strict vegetarian diet. You have one head of lettuce in your re-