

The following is excerpted from

“Adventures in Bad Casting”

A Three Character Comedy

By Ken Levine

Set in 1955, what if James Dean was hired to play Sergeant Bilko instead of Phil Silvers?

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ADVENTURES IN BAD CASTING

A 10-Minute Comedy by
Ken Levine

SYNOPSIS: Set in 1955, what if James Dean was hired to play Sergeant Bilko instead of Phil Silvers?

JAMES DEAN -- 20's, the iconic brooding movie icon
WRITER -- Middle aged, level-headed
DIRECTOR -- Middle aged, running out of patience

ADVENTURES IN BAD CASTING

INT. SOUNDSTAGE -- DAY

Either bare or suggestion of an army barracks. The DIRECTOR is conferring with THE WRITER. Both are holding scripts.

DIRECTOR

I think we need to recast. He isn't the guy.

WRITER

Look, I wrote the part and am producing the show. It's my call.

DIRECTOR

He scares me.

WRITER

He's a brilliant actor. You've got to give him a chance. And CBS wants him.

DIRECTOR

Still. James Dean is just not right to play Sergeant Bilko.

JAMES DEAN enters, wearing Bilko's traditional khaki uniform.

JAMES DEAN

My hands. My hands are raw!

DIRECTOR

They are? Why?

JAMES DEAN

I peeled potatoes for seven hours. I need to immerse myself in the Army. I need to become a soldier. I need to feel inwardly what it's like to actually be a dogface.

DIRECTOR

So you peeled potatoes?

JAMES DEAN

Yes. And yesterday I marched fifteen miles.

WRITER

Wow, that's very... dedicated of you.

JAMES DEAN

I'm trying to get my hands on some grenades to see what that's like. Dennis Hopper says he knows a guy, so we'll see.

DIRECTOR

Preparation for the role is very admirable but this is a situation comedy. I don't think you'll ever need to throw a live grenade. Especially since we film in front of a live studio audience.

JAMES DEAN

But this Bilko -- he has rage. Pent up rage.

WRITER

Well, actually, he's more of a happy-go-lucky con artist.

JAMES DEAN

On the surface yes. But what's underneath? I need to rip away his skin, explore his organs. You say "con artist" but what do his entrails say?

DIRECTOR

(sotto, to writer) I hear Phil Silvers is interested.

WRITER

No. This can work. (then) So James, we have a few minutes before the cast and crew show up, how about if we go over some of the lines?

JAMES DEAN

Fine.

DIRECTOR

Where's your script?

JAMES DEAN

I memorized it.

WRITER

Well, you didn't have to do that, but great. And thanks for being here so early.

JAMES DEAN

I arrived at 0500 hours. I taught myself the trumpet and learned to play revelry.

WRITER

Again, not necessary.

JAMES DEAN

I always wanted to star in the "Louie Armstrong Story," but they kept saying there was one thing holding me back. But now there's not because I learned the trumpet.