

THE VILLAGER PHOTO sides

In this absurdist comedy, a recent Pulitzer-prize winning photographer battles his conscience during a clandestine rendezvous with a high-level intelligence officer who demands the secret behind a viral photo.

REED: (Male or Female, 20s-40s) A young, up-and-coming photographer who lets their conscience get in the way of success. Comedic chops a must. All races and ethnicities encouraged to audition.

GIDEON: (Male or Female, 40s-70s) a mysterious character reminiscent of a film noir gumshoe. Think classic Humphrey Bogart. All races and ethnicities encouraged to audition.

SCENE

AT RISE: A man in a suit, over coat and hat sits patiently on the bench, smoking a cigar, reading a newspaper. He's looks the older, hard-boiled spy- game type. REED, a young ambitious photographer, approaches nervously. He won't sit at first. He reluctantly takes part of his bagel, throwing to the pigeons.

REED Nice day for feeding the pigeons.

GIDEON Pardon?

Beat.

REED The last known passenger pigeon, *ectopistes migratorius*—a captive name Martha—died on September 1, 1914.

GIDEON You don't say? That is a remarkable fact.

REED They are a remarkable species. The man on the phone said to give you an arcane fact about pigeons or something to confirm who I was.

GIDEON Sit down, son.

REED *(beat, then looking around again)* You are Gideon, right?

GIDEON You brought no one, as instructed?

REED Of course not.

GIDEON We have eyes all over, so that wouldn't be smart, Mr. Harmon.

REED Are you FBI or CIA or something?

GIDEON Let's just say I sanitize the past. And heal guilty consciences.

REED So you *are* Gideon?

GIDEON It's not important who I am, Mr. Harmon. What's important is who I represent.

REED But they said on the phone to confirm you were Gideon.

GIDEON I'm Gideon, all right! Sit.

REED *(sitting)* Probably not your real name. Listen: I just want to help. And come clean.

GIDEON You have no weapons, wires, cameras on your person?

REED No.

GIDEON It wouldn't help anyway. So I suppose congratulation are in order. You're a Pulitzer Prize winner, Mr. Harmon.

REED Yes. Well, I'm not really sure if I am. I mean everyone loves the photo, It's perfect. Perfect composition. Perfect exposure. Perfect subjects. Evocative. My editor said it at once has pathos and hope, doubt and certainty. But I'm confused as to why the FBI or the CIA would be interested in a photo.

GIDEON That must mean something to a guy like you. The Prize.

REED It's all I've ever wanted, my whole life. But not this way. Leslie didn't send you, did you?

GIDEON Who?

REED My editor.

GIDEON Son, a guy in my position doesn't talk to editors. So, now here you are, the world's greatest photographer—with a serious problem.

REED Again, things are in question as to whether—I'm the greatest.

GIDEON —with the industry's most coveted accolade. You'll forever be known as the guy who took the Villager Photo