

IN TRAINING

CHARACTERS

MANAGER  
NEW HIRE

(Characters can be played by any actor.)

SETTING: A theater stage, in total darkness.

TIME: Now.

*Lights never come up. Entire play done in the dark.*

Meow. NEW HIRE

Meow. MANAGER

Is that right? NEW HIRE

People like that. MANAGER

Meow. NEW HIRE

More like a question? MANAGER

What? NEW HIRE

Say it more like a question. MANAGER

Meow? NEW HIRE

With more feeling. MANAGER

MEOOW! NEW HIRE

MANAGER  
More feeling doesn't mean yelling — That's okay, you're new.

NEW HIRE  
I'm in training. It says so on my name badge. See? It —

MANAGER  
Right. Try again. More feeling, less yelling.

ME-OW. NEW HIRE

That's good. MANAGER

It is? NEW HIRE

Right in the sweet spot. MANAGER

Where is that? NEW HIRE

Like the racket — The sweet spot — Where the ball just goes thwack. MANAGER

I've never heard of a sweet spot before. NEW HIRE

You are new, aren't you? MANAGER

Is it like a sweet tooth? NEW HIRE

No. MANAGER

Meow? NEW HIRE

That time is over. The moment for that has passed. MANAGER

I didn't know — I'm sorry. NEW HIRE

No harm no foul. I should explain the parameters. MANAGER

Yes, the guidelines. Thank you. I'm new — NEW HIRE

MANAGER  
On the job training. Guardrails.

NEW HIRE  
That sounds nice.

MANAGER  
Hold this bag of snakes.

NEW HIRE  
What bag of? Oh — *This* bag of snakes. My goodness. Um —

MANAGER  
You're doing well with that.

NEW HIRE  
I did say in my interview I was looking for opportunities to grow.

MANAGER  
Growth is good. You don't want to come in with a fixed mindset.

NEW HIRE  
These guys sure are wriggly!

MANAGER  
They haven't eaten today.

NEW HIRE  
When do they eat?

MANAGER  
Any minute.

NEW HIRE  
What minute exactly?

MANAGER  
Now reach in that bag of snakes and pull one out. Wait!

NEW HIRE  
Reach in or?

MANAGER  
Just wait!

NEW HIRE

Okay.

MANAGER

We've had some issues with just reaching into bags of snakes. So, we've got a new policy.

NEW HIRE

I learned about the photocopier machine —

MANAGER

Yeah, that thing jams when you load it with too much paper. But no, this is a snake rule.

NEW HIRE

I'm listening.

MANAGER

It's not a big deal.

NEW HIRE

I'm open to new ideas!

MANAGER

When you reach your hand in that bag of snakes, just keep your fingers tucked together —

NEW HIRE

Like this?

MANAGER

Probably. It's hard to say.

NEW HIRE

I value your feedback.

MANAGER

Imagine you're meeting a new dog. Keep your fingers tucked.

NEW HIRE

Okay — Got it. I'm allergic to dogs. Most dogs — their dander. Is that a problem?

MANAGER

And now reach into that big bag of snakes.

NEW HIRE

Meow?

We're done with that.

MANAGER

MEOW!

NEW HIRE

I sense that you're afraid. In the future, it would work better for me if you weren't.

MANAGER

Meow.

NEW HIRE

Here we go. Open the bag.

MANAGER

Like meeting a new dog?

NEW HIRE

Fingers tucked. Get right in there.

MANAGER

Oh — My — God.

NEW HIRE

They move a lot, don't they?

MANAGER

It's all — I just. Meow?

NEW HIRE

Now pick one up.

MANAGER

Which one?

NEW HIRE

Any one. Don't worry — There are just a few in there that can do any real damage.

MANAGER

Just a few?

NEW HIRE

And you're a whole person — They might bite, it hurts, but they're not going to *kill* you.

That is a comfort. NEW HIRE

Are you someone who needs a lot of direction or — MANAGER

Got one! NEW HIRE

Good work! MANAGER

What now? NEW HIRE

I see real leadership potential in you. MANAGER

And the snake? NEW HIRE

Now you let it go. MANAGER

Where? NEW HIRE

Just put it down. MANAGER

On the floor? NEW HIRE

Yes. That's what we do. MANAGER

He seems angry! Or fearful — NEW HIRE

You're projecting. MANAGER

Well he's thrashing around a lot! NEW HIRE

MANAGER

Why do you assume he's a he? You might need some supports around that.

NEW HIRE

Meow.

MANAGER

Let the snake go.

NEW HIRE

On the floor.

MANAGER

There's a big bag of snakes and we're here to let them go so they can —

NEW HIRE

Meow?

MANAGER

So, they can — It's our *mission*.

NEW HIRE

What is?

MANAGER

Just let the snakes go.

NEW HIRE

One at a time?

MANAGER

You have to start somewhere.

*The sound of a rubber snake hitting the floor.*

MANAGER

Don't drop him!

NEW HIRE

I'm sorry?

MANAGER

That's okay. Not everyone has the instincts for this.

NEW HIRE

I'm new. I'm in training?



MANAGER

In the future, it would work better for me if you let the snakes down easily —

NEW HIRE

Could you please show me how you do it?

MANAGER

I take my hand and I make a fist, fingers tucked underneath, like I'm meeting a new dog.

NEW HIRE

Meow...

MANAGER

Then I reach it into the bag of snakes and I just let my hand rest there a sec, until it's clear which snakes wants to respond. You have to have their buy-in, their cooperation. Respect is earned, you know? Yeah. Then I uncoil my fingers — no sudden movements — And reach around, like this. You want to go for the head, especially because a few of the snakes are biters.

NEW HIRE

We went over that?

MANAGER

But it bears repeating.

NEW HIRE

Okay — Got it.

MANAGER

The snake and I are — I just try to give the snake room to collaborate.

NEW HIRE

How do you do that?

MANAGER

I pull him out — Like this.

NEW HIRE

How do you know it's a him?

MANAGER

Or her — For example — I pull the snake out and we have a moment. I bring the snake close.

NEW HIRE

That tickles!

MANAGER

That's his tongue — Or her tongue — She's smelling you. That's what they do.

NEW HIRE

How long have you worked here?

MANAGER

I know all about the photocopy machine. I know everything.

NEW HIRE

You and the snake have a moment and —

MANAGER

Snakes can't talk! So, I bring it in close and I just sense its intentions. You try. I'll hold my snake in one hand and the bag in the other. You find a snake just like I showed you.

NEW HIRE

Like this?

MANAGER

It's a process.

NEW HIRE

Okay — This does feel more natural.

MANAGER

It's about mutual respect.

NEW HIRE

Cooperation! Trust.

MANAGER

Meow?

NEW HIRE

Meow.

MANAGER

Got your snake?

NEW HIRE

Got him.

MANAGER

Or her —

NEW HIRE

Right. Sorry —

MANAGER

That's okay! Now we just ease down slowly and let the snake go.

NEW HIRE

Ease down slowly.

MANAGER

No sudden moves.

NEW HIRE

No sudden moves.

MANAGER

There. See?

NEW HIRE

He — or she — just wriggled away!

MANAGER

It always gives me a feeling of accomplishment.

NEW HIRE

What do we do now?

MANAGER

We let all the snakes go.

NEW HIRE

All at once?

MANAGER

We let them go one at a time, and then we go pick them up.

NEW HIRE

And we do this because?

MANAGER

Because I said so.