



## A LIVELY OUTFIT

By Jeff Dunne

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## CHARACTERS

- THEO                      A young man, perhaps late teens, who is looking to bring in a little money.
- FRANK                     Owner of Stein Mart, and a scientist on the verge of a great discovery.

## SETTING

A back room in a department store; modern day.

SCENE

*(It is a back room of a department store. An older gentleman is standing near a table considering some clothes laid out upon it. Behind him are more clothes, perhaps on racks or just in piles.)*

THEO

Hello? Mr. Stein? They told me to come back he—

FRANK

Yes, yes! Come in, come in.

THEO

Are you Mr. Stein?

FRANK

Call me Frank. And you are?

THEO

Theogore Maclovski.

FRANK

Theodore Maclov—

THEO

Actually, it's *Theogore*. It's an old family name. But everyone calls me Theo.

FRANK

I see. So, Theo, are you from the area?

THEO

Yes sir. I grew up on Estero Island. We used to live off of Meadowlark, but—

FRANK

Fine, fine. Now tell me, Theo... *(he suddenly becomes very intense...)* Why do you want to work at Stein Mart?

THEO

Well, my mom said that I should try to get a job at Carl's Jr., but when I saw that you were looking for an assistant, it just sounded like it was a good fit. You see, I'm trying to earn some extra money in—

FRANK

Bah! Money!? This is just about money? Off with you. Out, out!

THEO

Wait! Mr. Stei— Frank, wait. Just give me a chance. I mean, the ad didn't really say much about the assistant job, so... so it's hard to get real excited when you don't know what you'd be doing.

FRANK

I'm looking for someone... *(trailing off, because he isn't sure he's ready to finish with "who will help me with my publicly unacceptable research".)*

THEO

Yes?

FRANK

*(Assesses Theo, then...)*

Do you know what we do here at Stein Mart?

THEO

Uh... you sell cheap clothing—

*(Frank gives a grunt of derision.)*

N- n- no, I didn't mean *cheap* clothing. I meant you sell clothes cheaply. Like at a discount. *(Frank is clearly not won over.)* Please, sir, just give me a chance.

FRANK

*What would you say...* if I told you that what I really do here is to bring clothes... to life?

*(A myriad of expressions cross Theo's face – the "ah ha" of being told a secret, the fear of realizing that you actually have no idea what it means, then the concern that maybe you're talking to a psycho.)*

Nothing! Apparently you'd say *nothing* if I told you that. Son, that's a little disappointing. I think we're through here.

THEO

Wait! No! Wait. I'm just... I was just... digesting what you said. So you mean that it isn't just about fabric, but finding what works together and making new fashions and... stuff.

FRANK

No! I don't give a rat's toenail about fashion!

THEO

You own a chain of clothing stores.

FRANK

I'm following a higher purpose! The stores are just a cover for my *real* work.

THEO

Whoa. What's your real work?

FRANK

Just what I told you. I am searching for a way to bring clothes... to life!

THEO

When you say...

FRANK

Yes! Yes yes! Life! Up and dancing around! Life! Talking, thinking, feeling!  
Liiiffefe!!

THEO

Clothes?

FRANK

*Living* clothes!

THEO

You're messing with me, aren't you?

FRANK

Just imagine it! No longer will clothing be something you just wear and discard, something to keep you warm. They'll be true companions on your journey through liiiffefe!

THEO

So like... friends.

FRANK

Oh so much more than friends! They'll... they'll... they'll... Well, yeah, um, actually a lot like friends. (*Pause, then conspiratorially.*) But softer.

THEO

Soft friends.

Right... FRANK

That you wear. THEO

Oh yes... FRANK

And that talk to you. THEO

Quietly... FRANK

I see. And, um, what would these clothes say to you? THEO

How should I know? I'm still in the research phase. You can't expect me to have all the answers at the get go. FRANK

So you haven't actually brought any clothes to life... THEO

Yet! FRANK

Yet. THEO

But I'm getting close. Very close. FRANK

And you're looking for an assistant to... THEO

Help with my experiments! I'm so close! (*Beat...*) Theo, I've got a good feeling about you. The enthusiasm you've shown for my work, it's clear you're the right man to help me usher in this new world! FRANK

I've shown enthusiasm? THEO