

He sat at the bar, his chin in his hand, staring into his empty coffee cup. Apart from the young man and the barman, the café was empty. It was only three o'clock in the afternoon, but already the sky was dark.

Danny looked at the rain and shook his head in despair. February in London. 'It's the worst time of the year,' he thought, 'The most depressing. The most ... hopeless.' He was only nineteen but his life was in ruins. He had no job, no money and no prospects. He wanted to be an actor. When he was only six years old he knew he wanted to act. He loved being the center of attention. He loved being someone else. And what did he hate right now? He hated being himself. A nobody. A loser.

Danny looked around and saw a newspaper on the bar. He glanced at the headlines, the cartoons, the sport. He didn't want to know what was on TV. There were too many successful actors there, too many stars. His eyes drifted to the horoscope.

### Your daily stars

*Madame Sosostris reveals the secrets of your future!*

Danny sighed. He didn't believe in the stars.

'Money has an influence on your life. And work. And family. And other people. But planet and stars millions of miles away? Forget it.' However, with nothing better to do, he looked at Pisces.

*You're going to have a bad start to your day.*

Well, that was true. The start to his day was awful. His sister spilled coffee on his new jacket, his dad refused to lend him any money, and his mum told him he had to baby-sit in the evening. Oh, and then he discovered he had a red spot on his nose. Fantastic.

*You're going to meet new people.*

1. Stop reading here and complete the information about the main character:

Name:	
Age:	
Star sign:	
Family:	
Job:	
Ambition:	

2. Madame Sosostris says 'You're going to meet new people.' Who do you think Danny met in the morning? Discuss your ideas then go on reading.

He met lots of people at an audition that morning. They were out of work actors just like him. It was an audition for a new production of *The Importance of Being Earnest*. Danny was nervous. His spot looked terrible. But he walked into the stage and smiled at the producer and at the director. Then they asked him to begin and ... disaster. He couldn't remember his lines!

*Then before lunch you'll hear some unexpected news.*

3. Madame Sosostris says '...before lunch you'll hear some unexpected news' What do you think happened to Danny? Discuss your ideas then go on reading.

After the audition, he went to the office where he worked in a boring job from nine to five. It was an insurance office. There were grey people in grey suits sitting at grey computers. Danny hated it, but he couldn't survive on his occasional acting work. His boss called out.

'Mr Spencer!'

His boss was a thin, bald man with a little moustache and a long nose.

'Yes, Mr Hall?'

'You're late, aren't you?'

'Er, yes,' said Danny. 'I had an appointment this morning.'

'But you forgot to tell me, didn't you?'

'What?'

'You didn't ask for the morning off, did you?'

The office was silent. Everybody looked at them.

'This is the last time, Mr Spencer. You're fired.'

So that definitely *was* a surprise. Danny looked more closely at his stars. This was a bit weird.

*Don't worry about the small things like having a good lunch...*

He didn't have any lunch. He walked along the London streets under the heavy London rain. But why shouldn't he worry about the small things?

... because later you will meet a tall dark stranger and your life will never be the same again.

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4. And now what do you think is going to happen?  
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A tall dark stranger! What a cliché!  
Madame Sosostrius had finally lost her touch! Then Danny heard the door open. There was a woman standing just inside,

shaking her umbrella. She was tall and good-looking with ... long dark hair. This was ridiculous! Danny stood up, walked straight past the woman, and out into the rain.

'How's it going, Ms De Ville?' asked the barman.

'Oh, not great,' she replied. Ms De Ville had an American accent. 'I'm looking for an actor for my new film and I just can't find the right guy. But you know, it's funny. The guy who just left looked perfect!'

Answer the following questions:

1. Why is Danny unhappy at the beginning of the story ?
2. Why doesn't he believe in horoscopes ?
3. What went wrong at his audition ?
4. Why did he lose his job ?
5. Why does he think 'you're going to meet a tall dark stranger' is a cliché ?
6. Why is the woman interested in Danny ?

Imagine that Danny doesn't leave the bar. Write the conversation between Danny and the woman (her name is Martha). Lay out the dialogue like a play.

DANNY:        *Can I get you a coffee ?*

MARTHA:      *That's kind of you. A double espresso, please.*

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