

CHARACTERS

The Consul. GEORGE GYSSLING: 46, the Nazi Consul to the American Film Industry. A puffed-up, officious bureaucrat who takes delight in the fact that he can tell all these famous people what to do. Neither icy, nor slimy, nor any other stereotypical type of Nazi, he personifies the notion of “the banality of evil”. German accent.

The Tramp. CHARLES CHAPLIN: 50, silent film comedian and director, the most famous man in the world. At turns puckish and passionate, is determined to make *The Great Dictator* both as proof that he can make great pictures in the talkie era and as a political statement and rebuke to complacency of the world to the threat of Hitler. British. Demonstrates several scenes from his pictures (including the globe dance), so an actor skilled in physical comedy is needed.

America’s Sweetheart. MARY PICKFORD: 47, retired silent film actress known as “America’s Sweetheart.” Currently the co-founder and chief executive of United Artists. Originally from Toronto. A woman trying to navigate a man’s world; sympathetic to Charlie’s position but ultimately having to come down on the practical side of things.

The Secretary. MISS HOLLOMBE: early twenties, Personal Secretary to Mary Pickford. Very smart and articulate; not so skilled as a secretary, but very skilled at sarcasm. Takes an immediate dislike to consul Gysling; something about her being Jewish- go figure! Story is told through her eyes (and ears; eavesdropping is also one of her skills). At one point imitates both Neville Chamberlain and FDR.

Setting: The reception area and office of Mary Pickford, Hollywood, California, Friday, September 1, 1939. The action is continuous.

SYNOPSIS

On the eve of World War II, Georg Gysling, the Nazi consul to Hollywood, confronts Mary Pickford, the silent film star and co-founder of United Artists, to stop production on Charlie Chaplin’s controversial first talkie, *The Great Dictator*. Gysling succeeds until war is declared and the movie is needed to buck up the allies.