

Scene 1

Jean stands in front of her parents, who are sitting together on a couch in a contemporary living room.

JEAN

And *that* is why I need the Louis Vuitton Tulum GM for Christmas.

FATHER

Jean, I still don't see why you need a fifteen hundred dollar purse.

JEAN

Daddy, this isn't just a purse, it's a status symbol.

FATHER

A status symbol? Now look here-

Jean suddenly burst out.

JEAN

And Stacie's father just bought her a Louis Vuitton.

FATHER

Jones!? That bastard!

JEAN

Now, if I had a Tulum GM, that'd show him. All he bought her was an Alma.

Father chews on his moustache.

FATHER

Alright, I'll think about it.

MOTHER

Harold, if this is just to one-up Mr. Jones, I really think-

FATHER

Please, don't insult me. Jean, you are excused.

JEAN

Thank you, daddy!

She exits. BLACKOUT.

Scene 2

A brief, elaborate dance routine to the climax of the 1812 Overture. At the center is Jean, with a brand-new Louis Vuitton Tulum GM.

Scene 3

A young woman enters from the left and walks along a deserted sidewalk, wearing a purse. She is followed by a man a short distance away. Two thieves lean against the wall far right.

LADY

(to the man behind)

Can't you walk any any faster?

BEN

No.

He looks down and stops, then picks up a penny and carefully examines it. The two thieves notice the woman and approach her.

THIEF 1

Ooh, look at that purse!

They begin to circle her, eying the purse hungrily.

THIEF 2

It's real cowhide and I love the gold rivets.

LADY

Why, thank you! It's a brand-new Manhattan.

THIEF 2

Aye, it's gorgeous, completely. Give it here.

They close in.

LADY

(shrieking)

Ben! I'm being robbed!

Ben looks up and saunters over.

BEN

Wh-whoa whoa whoa, what are you doing?

THIEF 1

(hostile)

What does it look like we're doing? We're taking this.

(CONTINUED)

BEN
You can't take that!

THIEF 1
Look. You wanna get hurt?

BEN
Huh?

Thief 1 starts making elaborate gestures and moves towards Ben, who starts to back down, intimidated.

THIEF 1
I don't think you wanna get hurt, because if you wanna get hurt, I can hurt you. Now just back off.

Ben does so.

THIEF 2
(exasperated)
Bob...

THIEF 1
Just take the purse!

Ben takes a deep breath and approaches Thief 1 again.

BEN
Hey, what is this, huh?

Thief 1 turns on him, enraged.

THIEF 1
You has some kinna problem here? What is it you not understanding? We're taking the purse, and that's all there is to it, OK?

Bob backs away, fidgeting. He watches nervously as Thief 2 wrestles the purse away from the woman.

LADY
(livid)
You haven't seen the last of me!

She turns on Ben.

LADY
Come on, you pathetic worm!

She stomps off stage right, and Ben dances after her, giving the thieves a wide berth.

(CONTINUED)

After a moment, Jean enters, wearing her new purse and humming to herself. The thieves accost her.

THIEF 1

Well, isn't this our lucky day?

THIEF 2

Is that a Tulum GM you're wearing so elegantly?

JEAN

Um...yes, but I need to be leaving...

She starts to turn around, but Thief 1 puts a hand on her shoulder.

THIEF 1

Not so fast.

He snatches the purse by its shoulder strap and hands it to Thief 2, who caresses it.

JEAN

HEY!

THIEF 1

Such a beautiful purse should not belong to a silly little girl.

Thief 2 lifts the purse to his nose and inhales deeply, then frowns suddenly and pauses. He sticks out his tongue and touches it to the purse. Immediately he roars in agony and drops the purse, then falls over, hands over his mouth. Jean stumbles backward, shocked, and Thief 1 hurls himself onto his knees, next to Thief 2.

THIEF 1

GUILLAUME! WHAT IS THE MATTER?

Thief 2 screams.

THIEF 2

THE PURSE! IT IS A FAKE!

Thief 1 looks up with a stony look on his face. While Thief 2 continues to writhe in silent agony, Thief 1 picks up the purse, stands, and looks at it very closely for a few seconds. He then straightens, and looks hard at Jean, who is still standing nearby, in shock.

(CONTINUED)

THIEF 1

That was a very cruel joke you play on us.

He tosses the purse at her feet and spits on it, then turns back to Thief 2 and helps him to his feet.

THIEF 1

Come, Guillaume. We still have the Manhattan. It's OK.

They slowly exit stage right, Thief 1 supporting Thief 2, who is still shaking. Jean waits for them to leave then, snatches up her purse.

JEAN

(to the right)

It's not a fake!

pause, Jean begins to panic.

JEAN

Daddy wouldn't do this to me...

BLACKOUT.

Scene 4

Jean sits at her desk in front of a computer..

JEAN

(typing)

Ok. www.forum.purseblog.com. New Thread.

She takes a deep breath.

JEAN

(typing)

Hi everyone, I just have a quick question. I got a Louis Vuitton Tulum GM for Christmas, but I think it might be a fake. Is there any way I can tell for sure?

Lights up on Girl 1, at another computer desk.

GIRL 1

Hi, welcome to the forums. Look at the date code and make sure it's accurate. It would help if you posted some pictures too.

Lights down on Girl 1, up on Girl 2.

GIRL 2

Even if you have a receipt, those can be faked so they're pretty useless.

(CONTINUED)

Lights down on Girl 2, up on Girl 3.

GIRL 3

The best way to tell if it's authentic is to look for a heatstamp, usually inside one of the small pockets. If there's no stamp, you might have a fake.

Jean starts frantically looking inside your purse.

JEAN

Ok, a heatstamp. It has to be here, it's in here somewhere...

Suddenly she falls into her chair, weeping.

GIRL 3

I'm terribly sorry. Do you think you might be able to return it?

Jean shakes her head, still crying.

JEAN

My d-d-daddy b-bought it for me! I don't know wh-where he bought it a-and he'd h-h-hate me if I told him to take it back!

Lights down on Girl 3, up on Guy.

GUY

LOL YOU GOT RIPPED OFF!

Suddenly Father and Mother enter.

FATHER

Jean, what's going on up here? I heard a male voice! Are you entertaining guests?

Jean throws the purse at Father, who catches it, surprised.

JEAN

You bought me a fake purse!

FATHER

What do you mean?

He inspects the purse.

FATHER

It certainly looks like a purse to me.

(CONTINUED)

JEAN

It's not a Louis Vuitton, daddy! It's a fake! And now Stacie will make fun of me every day, and I'll have to change schools, and I'll lose all my friends, and it's your fault! I HATE YOU!

THE INSPECTOR

(off-stage)

"Hate" is a very strong word.

The Inspector enters, dressed in a long trench coat and carrying an exquisite purse over his shoulder. Both Jean and Father are stunned.

FATHER

N-n-now, I say, who are you?

THE INSPECTOR

I am the Inspector. May I see that purse?

He takes it from Father, who is shocked into inaction. The Inspector looks it over and sniffs in disgust.

THE INSPECTOR

Indeed a fake, and a poor one at that.

FATHER

I-I say, I spent a thousand dollars on that!

The Inspector chuckles.

THE INSPECTOR

Fool. Where did you buy this...object? I will not refer to it as a purse.

FATHER

Oh, well, down at the market on 42nd.

The Inspector's eyes light up.

THE INSPECTOR

From a short, mousy fellow? Terrible fashion sense?

FATHER

Y-yes, that's the one! You know the chap?

The Inspector cracks a predatory grin.

THE INSPECTOR

I've been onto him for years. Every time I get close, he slips between my fingers. But he won't get away this time. Jean, come with me. You,

(CONTINUED)

(he points to Father)
Stay here and try to learn how to identify a fake
purse. Maybe then you won't be a complete failure as a
father.

The Inspector leaves, and Jean follows. BLACKOUT.

Scene 5

*Lights up on a short, mousy man in bright orange
pants and a red and white striped shirt. He sits
in a purple folding chair behind a table covered
in purses. The Inspector and Jean enter from left.
The Inspector points to the man.*

THE INSPECTOR

(quietly)
That's him.

The man sees them and leaps to his feet.

MOUSE

Get away! Get away from me!

JEAN

We don't want trouble.

MOUSE

GET THE HELL AWAY FROM ME!

*Mouse steps quickly backward and trips, falling
flat on his back. The Inspector walks slowly
towards him, obviously holding a gun in his trench
coat pocket.*

THE INSPECTOR

There's no escape now.

*Mouse looks at the Inspector, then Jean. He is
breathing very fast.*

MOUSE

Who's she?

THE INSPECTOR

One of the many girls whose life you've destroyed. You
might remember selling her father one of your Tulum
GMs?

Mouse gets up, nodding slowly.

(CONTINUED)

MOUSE

Yes, I remember.

THE INSPECTOR

(bursting out)

HAVE YOU NO SHAME? Do you even think about those you have wronged, and all they must suffer thanks to you? Seeing this girl, in the flesh, only one of so many victims, and you feel no remorse?

MOUSE

OF COURSE I FEEL REMORSE! I do this because I have to! You don't think I hate myself every day, doing what I do? There is nothing - NOTHING - more painful than selling a single fake purse to a dear innocent girl like her!

(his voice starts to waver)

And I've sold hundreds! And if you think I've become numb to it, oh, you couldn't be more wrong. Every time it's as painful as the day I began, when I sold a f-fake Fendi to a little twelve-year-old visiting from Idaho.

(fighting back tears)

I couldn't sleep that night. After the second day I wanted to die. I deserve to die for what I've done.

Mouse begins to cry in earnest.

MOUSE

(between sobs)

Go ahead, shoot me.

Nobody moves.

MOUSE

I said shoot me!

pause

THE INSPECTOR

No.

MOUSE

What?

THE INSPECTOR

Death is the easy escape.

(deep breath)

No, you're going to live with your crimes. You will serve as a warning to all who would repeat what you have done, who would ruin lives the way you have. Killing you solves nothing.

(CONTINUED)

Without lowering his gun, the Inspector pulls a pair of handcuffs out of his other pocket and hands them to Jean.

THE INSPECTOR

Put these on our friend here.

Jean walks hesitantly over to Mouse, who wipes his eyes with one hand before extending both. Jean puts the handcuffs on him and locks them, then looks up at him. He looks down into her eyes.

MOUSE

(shaking)

I am so sorry.

Jean backs away. The Inspector lets go of his gun pocket and walks over to Mouse, taking him by the shoulder.

THE INSPECTOR

Let's go, now.

The Inspector slowly leads Mouse off stage right. Jean watches them go, right hand on her mouth.

BLACKOUT.