

At rise: ACTOR 1 is discovered picking up his various belongings and putting them into a bag. Presently, ACTOR 2 enters from stage L., a backpack slung over his shoulder.

Heading out? ACTOR 2

Yep...yep. ACTOR 1

(scanning the room)  
I thought I left my... ACTOR 2  
(beat)  
Huh...I guess I didn't.

What? ACTOR 1

Oh, nothing. Just losing my mind, that's all. ACTOR 2  
(beat)

Great audience tonight. ACTOR 1

Oh yeah, fantastic. Stellar. ACTOR 2

Not like last night's. ACTOR 1

Oh...oh, don't even remind me. What the hell was wrong with that lot? Miserable bastards. ACTOR 2

Beats me. Still, tonight's made up for it. ACTOR 1

ACTOR 2

Damn right – and then some. They were loving everything I was doing out there. How about you? Felt good?

ACTOR 1

Well...I mean...yeah...I mean...yeah...more or less. It's just that...

ACTOR 2

What?

ACTOR 1

Well...I mean...it was good, all of it, it just...well, just right at the very end, it just...something...it just felt a bit off, d'ya know what I mean?

ACTOR 2

Yeah, endings are tricky. 'Course, I'm not in the last scene, so it's not really my problem.

ACTOR 1

Well, no, and...and the thing is...well...I mean...I don't wanna sound arrogant or anything, 'cause I'm not, I mean, you know me.

ACTOR 2

Oh, yeah, no, no.

ACTOR 1

But it was definitely off, and the thing is, it usually is...and the thing is, you know, like...I'm not sure if it's me...or the play.

(beat)

ACTOR 2

Huh?

ACTOR 1

'Cause, I mean, you know...I'm a classically trained actor.

ACTOR 2

Right, right.

ACTOR 2

I mean, I've had private coaching from McKellen.

ACTOR 2  
(taken aback)  
McKellen?

ACTOR 1  
Oh, yeah.

ACTOR 2  
Well, that's certainly impressive.

ACTOR 1  
Yeah, yeah – he's very good.

ACTOR 2  
You don't have to tell me.  
(musing)  
Fancy that, private coaching from Sir Ian McKellen.

ACTOR 1  
Oh, no...not that one.

ACTOR 2  
What?

ACTOR 1  
Not Ian – John.

ACTOR 2  
John?

ACTOR 1  
Yeah, John McKellen. He rents one of those studios over on Gower Street. He's very good. Very, very good.

ACTOR 2  
Oh...right.

ACTOR 1  
Anyway, the thing is...I know my stuff, you know?

ACTOR 2  
Yeah, 'course you do.

ACTOR 1

But just at the end – and I have no idea why – something just always seems to ring a bit...false.

ACTOR 2

Well, like I said, you know – endings are tricky things. Sometimes they just sort of lazily drift off, leaving everything up in the air; other times, they get wrapped up all too conveniently by a bus load of silly coincidences that leave you with the feeling that you've just been ripped off; and then other times...well, other times they just feel a bit...tacked-on, you know?

ACTOR 1

Tacked-on? How do you mean?

ACTOR 2

You know, like a...what's it called? A deus ex machina.

ACTOR 1

A what?

ACTOR 2

A deus ex machina. It's a plot device that writers use – presumably when they're at a complete and utter loss of how to finish what they started.

ACTOR 1

But what is it?

ACTOR 2

Well, it's, you know, it's where they suddenly introduce some completely unexpected event or person or whatever that changes the whole scenario in one fell swoop and gets them out of the hole they've dug themselves into.

ACTOR 1

Sounds like a bit of a cop-out to me.

ACTOR 2

It is. And I've a feeling that that, my friend, may well be your problem.

ACTOR 1

Huh.

(ponders)

Yeah...yeah, you might have a point there.