

MAKING THE ROUNDS

by Ken Bradbury
and Robert L. Crowe



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A Play in Two Acts

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Skip

Margo

ACT ONE

NARRATOR: Good Evening. I would like to begin this joyous occasion on somewhat of a negative note. I want to make a correction in the program. No, no. Not necessary for all of you to get out your programs. The program has me listed as “Narrator.” I prefer to think of myself as “Master of Ceremonies.” No difference to you but it is a boost to my self-esteem.

In “The Tempest” Shakespeare said, “What’s past is prologue.” That’s true in almost every instance except this one. I don’t know of anything in the past that would prepare you for this evening. Let’s look at the title of the play: “Making the Rounds.” That is intentionally vague. The play could be about doctors at a hospital, or a postman in your neighborhood or somebody who makes hula-hoops. And the answer is ... all of those. We have selected for you a variety of experiences while we’re “Making the Rounds” of life. And, of course, nothing illustrates that as well as the topic of death ... which brings us to our first scene of the play. We join a funeral ceremony ... in progress.

SCENE 1 – So Long, Kitty

CARSON: *(as Lucy and Parker stand to one side of Carson, solemn)* Dearly departed, we are gathered here today to celebrate the life of our friend. ... to put him into the ground ... his final resting place. *(Lucy begins to sniffle.)* He was a good friend. We all loved him. *(Lucy begins to sob quietly and Parker moves to comfort her.)* He led a good life. For ... *(to Lucy)* ... how old was he?

LUCY: *(through her tears)* Seven.

CARSON: For seven years he was with us. He ran with us; he played with us; he ate the scraps off our floor. *(a pause, then)* I can’t do this.

PARKER: You gotta!

CARSON: I cannot do a funeral for a cat! I feel silly!

LUCY: Bubba’s dead! You promised you would do his funeral! *(She cries some more.)*

CARSON: I’m sorry, Lucy. I really am. But I don’t think this is right. I mean, having a funeral for an animal. Can’t we just bury him and go have a Coke?

LUCY: How can you think of refreshments at a time like this?

CARSON: Hey, I can always stand a snack. Look, let’s just toss a little dirt onto the shoebox and call that a funeral.

LUCY: You promised, Carson!

PARKER: You promised!

CARSON: Okay! Okay! Dust to dust, ashes to ashes, hairballs to hairballs ...

PARKER: Carson!

CARSON: He ran! He jumped! He chased laser pointers! He chewed the fringe off my dad's easy chair and got a swift kick.

PARKER: Carson!

CARSON: What am I supposed to say about a cat? He spent the whole day sleeping and eating. What am I supposed to say about that?

LUCY: He cuddled up to me at night when it stormed.

CARSON: That's because he was scared, Lucy. This wasn't a German Shepherd watchdog, it was just a cat.

PARKER: Carson!

CARSON: Okay! Okay! So we come to bury him today, in the shade of the tree he used to climb to steal the eggs of poor little robins.

LUCY: He was hungry.

CARSON: Tell that to Mama Robin. We bury him in the yard that he used to run in, chasing the water hose, trying to catch grasshoppers, eating disgusting things out of the garbage ...

PARKER: Go ahead and end it, Carson. You're really bad at this.

CARSON: Thanks. So now we close with a song from Parker.

PARKER: What?

CARSON: I did the funeral speech. Now you've got to sing the song at the gravesite.

PARKER: I don't have any song!

CARSON: Then make something up.

PARKER: I don't even know what I'm doing.

CARSON: Like I do?

PARKER: *(comes forward, clears his throat, fidgets, then finally, to the tune of "On Top of Old Smokey")*

Our poor old dear Bubba. He got himself hurt.

And now he just lies there... all covered with dirt.

(Lucy sobs.)

He ran out of lives now. He ran out of luck.

He saw the girl kitty. But didn't see the truck.

(Lucy breaks out in buckets of sobs.)

PARKER: I'm sorry.

LUCY: No, no ... that was ... that was beautiful.

CARSON: Really?

PARKER: You're kidding.

LUCY: Now I think we should all share a memory of Bubba ... something sweet ... you know, loving.

(Carson and Parker look at each other. This is going to be tough.)

CARSON: *(finally)* Uh ... like what did you have in mind?

LUCY: Just something nice. You know.

PARKER: About a cat?

LUCY: Yeah. Something that Bubba would have liked.

PARKER: *(to Carson)* Your turn.

CARSON: Me?

PARKER: Yeah. You're good at cats. Remember when you took your sister's cat out back behind the house and ...

CARSON: (*quickly covering Parker's mouth with his hand*) Okay! That's enough. (*clearing his throat*) Let's see ... something nice about Bubba the cat. Uh ... he wasn't a hamster.

PARKER: Huh?

CARSON: I don't like hamsters. Bubba wasn't a hamster and I loved him for that.

LUCY: That's the best you can do?

CARSON: Uh ... he was ... you know ... soft and stuff.

PARKER: That's so touching.

CARSON: Okay, your turn.

PARKER: I'm still thinking.

LUCY: Hurry up. We've got to bury him.

PARKER: Bubba ... oh, poor old Bubba ... what a cat. A fine cat. He was so ... uh ... cattish and stuff.

CARSON: Cattish?

PARKER: Feline! He was really, really feline.

LUCY: All cats are feline.

PARKER: Yeah, but Bubba ... good old Bubba ... he could feline like no other cat. Sometimes I'd just walk up to him and say, "Hey Bubba! Feline for me!" And you know what? He'd do it. He'd just feline all over the place. I mean that cat could feline like nobody's business.

CARSON: And purr!

PARKER: Yeah! Yeah! Nobody purred better than that feline Bubba.

CARSON: And scratch.

PARKER: Good scratcher.

CARSON: And lick.

PARKER: Nobody could lick Bubba's licking. Had a tongue like maybe two feet long.

LUCY: This isn't helping. A funeral's supposed to be filled with really nice talk about the dead body.

PARKER: Lucy, there's only so much you can say about a cat.

LUCY: You never liked him did you?

PARKER: Me? I loved that cat! Lucy, I adored your cat!

LUCY: You used to tease him.

PARKER: Joking! I was just joking!

LUCY: (*to Carson*) And you ... you always cringed when he came around.

CARSON: He used to rub up against my leg, Lucy. I couldn't get into that. Creepy. And he always made me sneeze.

LUCY: Some friends! My cat gets run over by a truck, my heart is broken, and you just laugh at me.

CARSON: We are not laughing! (*to Parker*) You laughing?

PARKER: Not even smiling. I'm heartbroken, really. I haven't slept in three days.

LUCY: You're lying.

PARKER: Okay. Two days.

LUCY: I don't believe you.

PARKER: I'm not lying, Lucy! I saw the truck go by, I ran out into the street and there was Bubba. Flat as a pancake!

LUCY: Did you try to save him?

PARKER: Save him? I'm not gonna give mouth-to-mouth to a pile of cat guts! (*Lucy wails.*) But I scooped him into Dad's shoebox ... his own little coffin. I did everything I could, Lucy! Honest! I knew how it would upset you so I didn't even let you see his mangled little body.

CARSON: We did our best, Lucy. We even threw in some Fancy Feast Friskies so when he got to heaven he could have lunch.

PARKER: Yeah. He won't be hungry.

LUCY: So this is it? This is the whole funeral?

PARKER: It's the best we could do.

CARSON: Honest, this is the first cat funeral I've ever done. I couldn't even find a book on it. What would you look under?

PARKER: Dead cats. (*Lucy wails.*) Sorry! Sorry!

CARSON: What else can we do, Lucy?

LUCY: I want to look at him one more time.

PARKER: Uh ... bad idea. Really bad idea.

LUCY: Why?

PARKER: Lucy, I scooped Bubba up off the road. I took a look at him. Believe me, you don't want to see him like this.

LUCY: I can take it.

CARSON: No, you can't.

LUCY: How do you know?

CARSON: Because I can't take it and I've got a stronger stomach than you do. Come on, Lucy, just let Bubba lie there. We'll throw on a little dirt and next spring he'll be a tulip.

PARKER: Maybe a pussy willow.

LUCY: That's not even funny.

CARSON: Think of it, Lucy! His little body will decay ... it's a really cheap shoebox ... and then it'll become fertilizer for all the little flowers and trees and someday ... someday you'll walk out here into your backyard and you'll say, "Wow! This is Bubba all over the place! Bubba begonias! Bubba marigolds! Bubba crab grass!" All over the yard! Nothing but Bubba and Bubba and Bubba!

(The other two simply stare at Carson for a long moment, not quite able to believe what they've just heard.)

CARSON: Okay, but it'll be nice, I promise you.

LUCY: I want to look at him.

PARKER: Lucy!

LUCY: He's my cat and I want one final look!

CARSON: Please, Lucy! Don't!

LUCY: I gotta! (*She reaches down and removes the lid as Carson and Parker recoil in distaste.*)

CARSON: (*as with Parker, his eyes averted*) Okay! That's enough! Close it! Close the lid!

LUCY: Bubba?

PARKER: Don't talk to him, Lucy. That's really creepy. Just close up the box.

LUCY: Bubba?

PARKER: Tell her to stop talking to him, Carson. This is too weird.

LUCY: Where's Bubba?

CARSON: Oh, don't get cute. Just close the box. Close it up!

LUCY: This isn't Bubba.

PARKER: Of course it is. Just bury him.

LUCY: This isn't Bubba.

CARSON: I read about this once. People go into denial when bad things happen. Lucy, you've just got to accept it.

LUCY: This is a sock.

CARSON: Huh?

LUCY: This is a dirty, woolen sock.

PARKER: We just held a funeral for a sock? Impossible! I saw it lying there in the road and ...

CARSON: Did you look closely?

PARKER: Of course not ... it was too ... gross.

CARSON: Did you touch it?

PARKER: No! I just closed my eyes and scooped it into the shoebox.

LUCY: We just had a funeral for a sock.

CARSON: We don't even know if it was dead.

LUCY: Carson!

CARSON: Sorry. (*sneezes*)

LUCY: Bless you.

CARSON: Thanks. (*sneezes again*)

PARKER: You sick?

CARSON: I don't think so. The only time I sneeze is when ... (*slowly looks down*) Hi, Bubba.

LUCY & PARKER: Bubba!

PARKER: He's alive.

CARSON: (*sneezes*) Oh, great.

LUCY: (*picking up her cat*) He's alive!

PARKER: Cancel the funeral!

LUCY: Oh, Bubba! Bubba! Bubba! (*Lucy carries Bubba offstage.*)

CARSON: I feel like ... (*sneezes*) ... a fool.

PARKER: Me, too. That was my dad's sock. I should have recognized it.

CARSON: Do socks go to heaven?

PARKER: I ... (*sneezes*) ... oh, forget it. (*Parker and Carson exit.*)

NARRATOR: It will become immediately clear to you that my role is completely unnecessary. We could roll between scenes without any banal comments from me. Banal. B-a-n-al. Means “lacking in originality.”

However, the producers of this show have opted to pay me the big bucks to divert your attention while the scene changes occur. So ... I will do my job.

I overheard some of the audience whispering during that last scene. Ordinarily that would bother me because of the distraction. However, they were talking about me ... and in a positive sense ... so I made an exception. They were saying how they wanted a chance at show-biz like the job I have. That, of course, would take years of training. There are other ways into the big-time of performing. Such is the plight in our next scene. The vehicle to the professional ranks? Puppy Pops, of course.

SCENE 2: Puppy Pops

CADEN: (*entering in a flurry*) This is it! I’m not kidding! This is the big time, Hunter!

HUNTER: What are you talking about?

CADEN: My career in theatre! What else? Look at me! Do I look like I’m on the verge of greatness or what?

HUNTER: I think you’re on the verge of losing your mind. What are you talking about?

CADEN: You’ve known me all my life, Hunter. You’ve known how I’ve dreamt of making it big in show biz.

HUNTER: I used to dream of cheeseburgers but that doesn’t mean I want to be one. You’re nuts, Cadan.

CADEN: Sure! Joke around now! But just wait until you hear about my new gig.

HUNTER: New gig?

CADEN: My next audition.

HUNTER: You’re auditioning for a movie?

CADEN: Well ... no.

HUNTER: A play? TV show?

CADEN: Close ... close.

HUNTER: Then what?

CADEN: A commercial!

HUNTER: Commercial?

CADEN: But that’s just a start. That’s just the way I break into show biz. Once my face gets flashed onto every TV in the nation then the sky’s the limit.

HUNTER: You’re auditioning for a commercial? For what?

CADEN: Oh, it’s big! Big!

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HUNTER: For what?

CADEN: I mean, it may seem small, but once they see me ... once they see me, Hunter, it's gonna be big!

HUNTER: How big? What are you advertising?

CADEN: Get ready for this.

HUNTER: I'm ready already. A commercial for what?

CADEN: Are you ready for this?

HUNTER: I'm ready! What you selling?!!!

CADEN: Puppy Pops!

HUNTER: What?

CADEN: Puppy Pops!

HUNTER: What are Puppy Pops?

CADEN: They're ... you know ... pops for puppies.

HUNTER: You mean dog food?

CADEN: They're not just dog food! They're the newest, the hottest, the most delicious little bit of doggie bites on the market!

HUNTER: I've never heard of them.

CADEN: That's why they're making the commercial! So the whole world will begin screaming out, "I Want Puppy Pops!"

HUNTER: (*a long pause, then*) I don't hear anything.

CADEN: Not yet! Wait 'til I make the commercial.

HUNTER: Uh ... Caden ... I don't want to pop your puppy dreams but are you sure that a dog food commercial is the quickest way to Hollywood?

CADEN: That's how stars are discovered! They make some little TV ad and a big-time movie producer sees it and says, "Wow! Now that's a talent I want in my next movie!"

HUNTER: That's actually happened?

CADEN: Oh, I'm sure it has ... somewhere. Wanna see my audition?

HUNTER: Not particularly.

CADEN: Come on! You'll be the first person in the country to see this big hit!

HUNTER: Okay. Go ahead. Get it over with.

CADEN: Okay, here's your script.

HUNTER: Mine?

CADEN: It's a two-person commercial.

HUNTER: Two-person?

CADEN: Well ... not exactly two persons. I mean, I'm playing a person.

HUNTER: What's the other character?

CADEN: The puppy.

HUNTER: The puppy? You want me to play a puppy?

CADEN: It's a talking dog, okay? Just read the part of the talking dog. I'll do the other part.

HUNTER: I am not playing a dog.

CADEN: You ... you? Hunter! My best friend! The kid I used to loan quarters for the pop machine! The kid who ate half my Twinkie in second grade lunch hour! We shared a toothbrush at summer camp!

HUNTER: I remember. You ate a lot of Cheetos back then. Disgusting.

CADEN: But ... but we've bonded over the years! We're like brothers/sisters!

HUNTER: Yeah. Not puppies.

CADEN: Just read it, okay? It's not like you're trying out. Just ready the puppy's lines.

HUNTER: I don't have to lick your hand do I?

CADEN: Don't be ridiculous.

HUNTER: Too late. I already feel ridiculous.

CADEN: Okay ... here's the scene. You're sitting by the fireside sleeping.

HUNTER: I'm doing what?

CADEN: You're sleeping. (*moving Hunter down to the ground*) Here ... by the fireplace. You're a tired puppy.

HUNTER: This is silly.

CADEN: It's show biz. Now close your eyes.

HUNTER: I can't read the script if my eyes are closed.

CADEN: Then pretend to close your eyes. It's called acting.

HUNTER: It's called stupidity.

CADEN: Come on! Please! You've got to help me rehearse!

HUNTER: (*collapsing onto the floor, feet in the air*) Okay, I'm sleeping.

CADEN: You're not dead!

HUNTER: I'm close.

CADEN: Sleeping! You're sleeping!

HUNTER: Okay, okay. (*Hunter adjusts his posture to a sleeping puppy position.*) Is this over yet?

CADEN: Then I come in from the kitchen and I say, (*in a very stilted manner*) "Oh my! I have one tired puppy! I know what he needs! Puppy Pops!" (*stares at Hunter, then*) Then you perk your ears up.

HUNTER: I do what?

CADEN: Your ears. You perk up your ears.

HUNTER: My ears don't perk.

CADEN: Then raise your head! Do something! I need motivation!

HUNTER: You need counseling. (*Hunter raises his/her head.*)

CADEN: Okay. Say your line.

HUNTER: My line?

CADEN: Right there on the script ... where the puppy speaks.

HUNTER: Puppies don't talk.

CADEN: This one does! It's a commercial! Come on, Hunter! Help me rehearse this.

HUNTER: (*looks at script, then reads dully*) “Oh wow. Sounds like time for Puppy Pops!” This is really dumb.

CADEN: That’s not in the script.

HUNTER: It should be.

CADEN: Okay, then I say, “Gosh! I think I’ll go get some! That will make him a peppy puppy!” Then I reach over and get a handful of Puppy Pops and you bark with joy.

HUNTER: I do what?

CADEN: Bark. Bark. And try to put some joy into it.

HUNTER: I don’t bark.

CADEN: Come on, Hunter! I need this part!

HUNTER: (*a pause, then without any enthusiasm*) Arf.

CADEN: That’s it?

HUNTER: That was my bark.

CADEN: Arf? One little arf?

HUNTER: I wasn’t that hungry.

CADEN: But these are Puppy Pops! They’re delicious! You’d do anything for a juicy, mouth-watering Puppy Pop!

HUNTER: Then you eat one.

CADEN: Me? It’s dog food!

HUNTER: I know. You expect me to go crazy over something that you wouldn’t put in your own mouth?

CADEN: (*crossing to Hunter, putting his/her hand on Hunter’s head*) Look Hunter. I’m an actor. You are obviously ... I don’t know ... an audience member. You know nothing about motivation, character development ... the ability to put yourself into the soul of another person. Trust me on this. I know what it takes to pull off a great scene. (*getting down on Hunter’s level*) You are a puppy. Your brain is very small. You have been sitting by the fireplace all night long because you have no imagination. The only things you care about are eating, drinking, and not making messes on the rug. You needs are very few. Then I ... your master ... offer this one little tidbit that will change your life forever. You come alive! You jump for joy! You now have a reason for living!

HUNTER: (*a long pause, then*) And I do all that with the word “Arf”?

CADEN: It’s called acting, Hunter. Believe me. I have the training. Now ... can we try this one more time?

HUNTER: I’d rather go to the mall.

CADEN: Hunter!

HUNTER: Okay! Okay!

CADEN: Take two! (*enters, then*) “Oh my! I have one tired puppy! I know what he needs! Puppy Pops!” (*stares at him, then*) That’s your cue.

HUNTER: My cue?

CADEN: Do something!

HUNTER: (*suddenly alert, excited, spastic*) Puppy Pops? Puppy Pops! Oh, the very sound of their name! I lie here snoozing by the fireplace,

dreaming of chasing cars, strangling cats, and chewing on rugs then a sound rings in my ears! Puppy Pops! Puppy Pops! Oh, blessed, tasty Puppy Pops!

CADEN: This isn't ...

HUNTER: (*but Hunter is on a roll*) ... My master sits eating prime rib and cheeseburgers then tosses me dry dog food for years and years. He munches upon sugar cookies and egg foo yung while I stick my cold, wet nose into a bowl of crumbled dog biscuits! Then one day they arrive! The food of my dreams! A banquet of the gods! A feast for my senses! Puppy Pops! Puppy Pops! Oh, blessed, tasty Puppy Pops.

CADEN: I think you're ...

HUNTER: (*not stopping now*) ... And with these powerful little morsels in my tummy I can now catch those cars! The cats will no longer scare me! I can make puddles wherever my heart desires!

CADEN: Uh, Hunter ...

HUNTER: ... No more will I be the simple little pet who licks his master's hand and wags his tail! I have become Super Pup! Master of the Universe! Destroyer of carpets, sweatshirts, tablecloths and that horrible sweater your grandma gave you last Christmas! I am the doggie that sees into the future! Who saves the world! Power Pooch! Wonder Dog! The Hero Hound! Leaping over puddles! Sniffing legs of strangers! Irrigating fire hydrants! All the world shall know my name as they bow in adoration to my canine presence! The universe shall cry out Puppy Pops! Puppy Pops! He did it all with Puppy Pops! Gloria in Excelsis Doggie! (*singing*) Halleluiah! Halleluiah!

CADEN: (*a very long pause as Caden simply stares at Hunter in disbelief and awe, then*) What did you just do?

HUNTER: I think I pulled a muscle. (*turning around*) Do you see anything hanging loose?

CADEN: That was ... like awesome.

HUNTER: Thank you.

CADEN: And you didn't even have any training.

HUNTER: I was house-broken at a young age.

CADEN: I mean in acting.

HUNTER: I was a sheep in the Christmas pageant.

CADEN: I mean ...

HUNTER: But nobody promised me Puppy Pops. Maybe I just needed motivation to act.

CADEN: But if you're that good and you don't even want to be an actor, then what am I doing ...

HUNTER: ... what are you doing trying out?

CADEN: Uh ... yeah.

HUNTER: (*a pause, then*) I don't know. It was your idea. (*a pause, then*) Wanna go outside and just ... you know ... hang around?

CADEN: And do what?

HUNTER: Play with my puppy? (*Caden smiles. They exit.*)

NARRATOR: Ahhh. He has a puppy. What a chick magnate! If you want to meet girls, all you have to do is go to “Rent a Puppy” and then walk around the mall for a few hours. I promise you that there will be many opportunities to meet the ladies. Of course, I don’t need any such obvious props but there are many who do. Let me ask you this. When you wanted to meet someone, did you have approach? A “pick-up line” if you want to call it that? Of course, you don’t want to call it that but let’s be honest. If you find something that works you use it. The hero of our next scene is struggling with this very problem. However, he has enlisted ... a coach.

SCENE 3: The Coach

JOHN: Please! I’m begging you! You’re the most beautiful girl in the whole world and my life means nothing without you!

BROCK: Oh, you’re just saying that.

JOHN: No! No! I mean it! I’ve dated hundreds of girls but none of them could compare to you! Really!

BROCK: But how can I know you mean it?

JOHN: Look at my eyes! Look at the honesty in my eyes! I promise! I’d never lie about a thing like this. Please! Please go out with me!

REBA: (*who’s been watching off to the side*) Hold it, hold it. That’s terrible.

JOHN: Too much?

REBA: Too everything. Look, you can’t get a date with Jessica by shouting at her.

JOHN: I was shouting?

REBA: Screaming.

JOHN: I think it’s you, Brock. I just can’t get it right ... you know ... talking to you.

BROCK: Did I ask for this job? Did I? No. You’re the one who wants to take Jess to the dance, not me. I just wanna get out of here and go home. We eat supper at six.

JOHN: No ... please stay. I need you, Brock.

BROCK: That’s embarrassing.

JOHN: I mean to take Jess’s place.

BROCK: (*indicating Reba*) Why can’t she do it?

JOHN: She can’t. She’s my coach. I need somebody to talk to and you’re my best buddy. Come on. You make a great girl.

BROCK: I’m leaving.

JOHN: (*stopping him*) I mean you’re a great actor. (*to Reba*) So what do I try next?

REBA: I don’t know. Maybe something more romantic ... softer. Girls are gentle. They like soft talk.

JOHN: Soft talk.

BROCK: Talk to me softly.
JOHN: I know what she's saying! I just don't know how to do it.
REBA: *(to Brock, softly)* Jess ... there's something different about you ... something ... I don't know ... special.
BROCK: Let's get married.
REBA: Stop that. *(to John)* Now try it.
JOHN: Soft talk.
REBA: Soft talk.
JOHN: *(to Brock)* Jessica ... gosh ... even your name sounds beautiful.
BROCK: Thank you.
JOHN: Jess ... out of all the girls I've ever known ...
BROCK: Yes?
JOHN: You smell the best.
BROCK: Huh?
REBA: What?
JOHN: What's the matter?
REBA: "You smell the best?" What are you doing?
JOHN: I was soft-talking.
REBA: You're trying to get a date, not picking out a watermelon! Good grief! You don't talk to a girl about how she smells.
JOHN: But he does smell good.
BROCK: That's my dad's aftershave.
REBA: Do you want my help or not?
JOHN: Okay! Okay! Look Reba, I'm just not getting this. Why don't I just send her a text?
REBA: You don't text a girl asking her out! You gotta get personal.
BROCK: How personal?
REBA: *(beginning to exit)* I give up!
JOHN: *(stopping her)* Okay! Okay! Come on ... keep coaching me.
BROCK: I'm gettin' hungry.
JOHN: Just a few more minutes. *(to Reba)* What else can I try?
REBA: Well ... a girl likes compliments ... not about her aftershave ... you know ... how she looks ... how she dresses.
JOHN: Okay, okay. I got it. *(goes off to the side, prepares himself a moment, then approaches Brock)* Jessica?
BROCK: Yes, John?
JOHN: I've been watching you.
BROCK: You have?
JOHN: Yeah. And you've got a great shape.
REBA: No! No! No! That's too much.
JOHN: Okay, okay. Jess?
BROCK: Yes John?
JOHN: You have beautiful eyes.
REBA: That's better.
JOHN: Your hair ... it's ... it's really lovely.

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- BROCK:** Thanks.
- REBA:** Good ... good.
- JOHN:** and you've got the best feet of anyone in our class.
- REBA:** What?
- JOHN:** Feet. She's got pretty feet.
- REBA:** You do not talk about feet!
- JOHN:** Huh?
- REBA:** Girls do not talk about feet! To a girl, her feet do not exist.
- BROCK:** What keeps them from falling down?
- REBA:** I mean you don't talk feet. Feet are ... disgusting.
- BROCK:** (*looking at his*) I think mine are pretty cool.
- REBA:** Of course you do! You're a boy! Try eyes ... girls think a lot about their eyes.
- JOHN:** Gotcha. (*to Brock*) Jess, your eyes are like diamonds.
- REBA:** That's old.
- JOHN:** Jess, your eyes are like starlight.
- REBA:** Corny.
- JOHN:** Your eyes are ... uh ... grapes.
- REBA:** Grapes?
- BROCK:** I like grapes.
- REBA:** Her eyes are like grapes?
- JOHN:** It's all I could think of. And I'm hungry.
- REBA:** I give up. I just give up. You have no imagination, John! It's no wonder Jessica doesn't even notice you.
- BROCK:** Bad boy.
- JOHN:** Oh, be quiet. So what do I do?
- REBA:** Look ... the typical boy is interested in one thing.
- BROCK:** Bad boy.
- REBA:** No. Himself. Lots of boys are self-centered and they only want to go with a girl to make themselves look cool.
- JOHN:** Yeah. I guess that about sums it up.
- REBA:** See what I mean? What girl wants to date a self-centered jerk?
- BROCK:** I'm ashamed of you, John.
- REBA:** If you want to be someone's friend ... really want them to like you ... then you've got to be truly interested in them. It doesn't matter whether you want to date them or just be their friend. We like people who are interested in us ... period!
- JOHN:** Oh.
- BROCK:** Oh.
- REBA:** So come on ... show some interest in her.
- JOHN:** I can do this.
- BROCK:** Do it quick. I'm starving.
- JOHN:** (*readies himself a moment, then*) Jess.
- BROCK:** Yes, John?
- JOHN:** What kind of things do you like?

BROCK: What do you mean?
JOHN: Like ... what's your favorite ice cream?
REBA: Ice cream?
JOHN: I'm trying, okay?
BROCK: Oh ... I guess I like them all.
JOHN: Good. Will you go out with me?
REBA: No! No! Too soon! You don't go right from the ice cream to the date. Too soon! Keep going!
JOHN: Oh geesh ... uh ... Jess?
BROCK: Yes, John?
JOHN: Do you like math?
REBA: How romantic.
JOHN: I'm trying.
BROCK: No. Math is hard.
JOHN: Yeah ... yeah, I agree. How about pizza? What's your favorite kind of pizza?
BROCK: I don't like pizza.
JOHN: You're supposed to play along with this, Brock.
BROCK: Sorry. Pizza gives me gas.
JOHN: Then I don't want to date you.
REBA: John!
JOHN: Sorry. Okay ... so Jess ...
BROCK: Yes John?
JOHN: Do you ever think about the really deep things in life?
BROCK: Like potholes?
REBA: Brock!
BROCK: Sorry.
JOHN: Like ... what's really important to you?
BROCK: Well ... I like taking long walks on the beach, looking at the stars, painting my fingernails, catching toads on the sidewalk after a rainstorm.
REBA: What?
BROCK: It's fun.
REBA: Brock!
JOHN: You know, I like those things too, Jess. Isn't it amazing how we like the same things?
BROCK: Amazing.
JOHN: Doesn't it just seem like we're made to be with each other?
BROCK: You ... me ... and our little toads.
REBA: Would you guys take this seriously?
BROCK: What have you got against toads?
REBA: Brock!
BROCK: Sorry! Look guys, I'm sorry but I've gotta go. My mom said to be home in time for supper.
JOHN: You'd leave me at a time like this.

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BROCK: (*weighing the choices in his hands*) John ... supper ...
John ... supper. See you tomorrow, John. (*He exits.*)

JOHN: Some friend.

REBA: John, you can do this. Really. You're just trying too hard.
You're trying to be somebody you're not.

JOHN: And I'm a terrible actor.

REBA: And you're a terrible actor.

JOHN: Maybe I should just give up. This same thing happened to me in Little League.

REBA: Little League.

JOHN: I wanted to be a pitcher but we already had some good pitchers so I tried out for catcher but I kept getting hit with the baseball. I don't like people throwing at me. So the coach tried me on second base because it's sort of covered up and the pitcher can help you field the balls, but I was terrible when guys tried to steal second.

REBA: Why?

JOHN: I'd always let them. Then they put me in right field because you hardly get any action out there, but then the other teams saw how lousy I was and started hitting balls to right field. They finally made me the water boy and I sat there all season passing out cups of water. Reba, it's like everything I try I mess up. And then in choir class ...

REBA: Yeah?

JOHN: The teacher asked me not to sing so loud so I got softer, then she told me it'd be best if I just moved my lips.

REBA: I'm so sorry, John.

JOHN: Hey ... you tried, okay? And I appreciate it. I really do. Not everybody has to go to that dance. I'll bet Jess has a lot of guys ask her. I think I'll go home and play video games or something. Really ... thanks for trying. (*begins to exit*)

REBA: John?

JOHN: (*stopping*) Yeah?

REBA: That was one the coolest things I've ever heard.

JOHN: What?

REBA: Your honesty.

JOHN: Huh? I sounded like a wimp.

REBA: You sounded like a guy who's not afraid to talk about how he feels. You know how unusual that is?

JOHN: Yeah. There aren't too many guys as helpless as me.

REBA: No. You've got it all wrong. You're not helpless ... you're real. I could go all week and never meet a guy with your kind of honesty.

JOHN: I ... I don't know what to say.

REBA: How about "Yes."

JOHN: Yes?

REBA: Yeah. How about "Yes, Reba. I'd like to go to the dance with you."

JOHN: You're kidding.

REBA: I'm not kidding.

JOHN: (*a long pause, then*) I ... I'm sorta speechless.

REBA: Me too. Pick me up at seven?

JOHN: Sure! (*as she begins to leave*) And Reba ...

REBA: (*stopping*) Yeah?

JOHN: Thanks ... Coach.

NARRATOR: The job of a coach is to take what talent is available and make the best of it. That's the best that any of us can do, whether coach or player. Our next guest has a little different take on that theme but the lesson is more important when we apply it to our friends and family. Whether in a game or in real life, sometimes we get to play ... and sometimes we must be the coach. Our job is to accept others as they are, and try to make them better. Such is the story of Jacob.

SCENE 4: One Special Brother

SPEAKER: When my little brother Jacob was six months old my mother said she was going to write a book. She was going to call it, "One Hundred Things That Can Be Flushed Down a Toilet." Jacob loved pulling handles and watching things disappear. We'd be missing a book or a credit card or a goldfish and we'd say, "Jacob!" He'd smile and say, "Whoosh! Whoosh!" Jacob didn't have much of a vocabulary until he was four or five years old so words were a big deal to him when he finally learned to talk. Words can do that. They can be a big deal.

Here's how it happens: the nucleus of every cell has 23 sets of chromosomes and there's this little rascal called chromosome 21. If you have an extra pair of 21's we call it Down syndrome. Not "Downs." Down. One out of every 691 babies born in our country this year will have it. That means about 6000 this year. And Jacob is one of them.

Jacob is probably the most ... How do I put this? ... amazing thing that's ever happened to our family. Just when we thought we had life figured out, along came Jacob and our world sort of got turned upside down ... or flushed away. Whoosh! Whoosh!

It was funny ... Mom was so worried about how to tell us that we were about to have a brother with a disability. She'd read about the proper way to break it to the family without causing too much heartache. And here's the part we still laugh about: My big brother said, "Lots of people with disabilities use dogs to help them get around. Does this mean we can get a dog?" And I said ... now remember, I was much younger ... I said, "Does this mean we can park in the handicapped spaces?" Jacob has provided us with a lot of laughs.

When he started to school he got in trouble ... a lot. Kids on the bus would tell him to do things and Jacob would do them. And not all of these

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things were good. The bus driver would get mad and he'd report it to the principal then the principal would call Mom and Dad. The kids would say, "Hey Jacob, go up and kiss that girl," and Jacob would go up and kiss that girl. They'd say, "Jacob, call the driver stupid," and Jacob would do it. Just words, but words can be a big deal.

And I hate to bring this up, but one of our major jobs was to convince Jacob that wearing clothing was a good thing. If he didn't like what he was wearing he'd just take it off ... no matter where he was. I think I'll skip the details but Mom had to do a lot of explaining in shopping malls when he was young ... and thank goodness that the people in church were understanding.

But the thing that got Jacob in the most trouble was his hugging. He hugs everybody. Everywhere. At any time. And when Jacob hugs you he closes his eyes, wraps his arms around you and you sort of have to hold your breath until he lets go. Sometimes you have to tell him to let go ... especially if it's a stranger at the supermarket or a lady walking down a sidewalk. Did I mention that Jacob's strong? I'll have to shout, "Enough, Jacob! Enough!" He understands that. Words are a big deal to Jacob.

Jacob is musical, too. I mean for a kid who can't carry a tune. He'll listen to a song he likes and that's all we'll hear for hours ... for days ... sometimes for weeks. Nothing can ruin a song like letting Jacob fall in love with it.

Oh ... and I've got to mention. Jacob's an addict. Ketchup. He's a ketchup addict. You name it and my little brother will slather it with ketchup and if he ever has to be punished all you have to do is threaten to take it away. Actually, he's opened up a whole new world of possibilities. It never occurred to me to put ketchup on cornflakes ... or peanut butter ... and unless you've tasted ketchup-flavored ice cream you just haven't lived. We won't let him do this at school or in restaurants because it sort of grosses people out, but at home I just try to look the other way.

When you have a brother like Jacob you sort of want to be with him all the time to protect him. Of course, you know that's impossible. You want to be there when other kids tease him and call him names. And yes ... he's cute and he's lovable and he loves everybody and kids still call him names. Sometimes he doesn't even know what the names mean and he'll come home calling himself that. The worst was the night he said, "Hey Dad! I'm a retard!" We all just sat there. It wasn't something he read and he probably didn't hear it on television. Someone had called him that and they'd thought it was pretty funny when he took up the name himself. Jacob really likes it when he can get a reaction out of people. So when we were all so shocked, he knew he'd had an effect on us, and it was really hard to get him to quit using the word. Retard. Because you see ... someday Jacob will know what the word means. I know what it does to my mom when she hears the word. I can see the look in Dad's face when one of his friends casually calls someone a retard in conversation. It hurts, okay? No matter what you've heard, words count.

Some people even defend saying it. They say, “When I was growing up that’s what we called it.” Well, that was then and this is now. It’s offensive. Grow up. Learn something. Deal with it. What it means today is, “You are an outsider. You’re not a part of the group.” It’s really not that hard to figure out. Imagine your own child with a learning disability standing in the lunch line. The boy behind him says, “Hurry up, you retard.” Is that okay with you just because your grandpa once used the word? Words matter.

Some say, “But the problem is called ‘mental retardation’ isn’t it?” No. In fact it isn’t. Words matter. Use the right ones, please. “But I’d never call your brother that name.” It doesn’t matter. As long as you use the word then you spread the problem, you keep it going.

“But it’s just a word.” Yes. Yes, it is. And words matter.

There’s an old saying, “Sticks and stones can break my bones but words will never hurt me.” Whoever came up with that has obviously never been called a name because of the way she looks, the way he talks, or the way they act. Of course words hurt. That’s why some people use them.

So what word do you use instead? How about ... “funny”? Have you ever been awakened by someone standing on your bed in his underwear singing, “Mama, Don’t Let Your Babies Grow Up to Be Cowboys?” Want another word? Try “determined.” Tell Jacob that he can’t put ketchup on the communion wafers at church. How about “sympathetic”? When Jacob sees someone crying his own tears begin to flow.

There’s lots of other words you can use: loving, bright, inquisitive ... *extremely* inquisitive. I mean *really* inquisitive. “No Jacob, you do not ask my friend how he smells.” You want words? There are a lot of wonderful, beautiful words to describe my brother.

One night as I was tucking Jacob into bed I said, “Jacob, you’re a handsome young man.” He said, “What’s that mean?” I said, “You’re good looking.” “What’s that?” he asked. “You’re a pretty boy, Jacob.” He smiled. He closed his eyes tightly and said, “I’m a pretty boy.” And the next day at school he announced to everyone that he was a pretty boy. He told his teacher, he told the lunchroom cooks, he told the janitor, he told the water fountain. We often believe what people tell us, because words ... yeah ... words matter.

NARRATOR: I never had the problem of anyone calling me “pretty boy.” I was called “pretty clumsy” and a few other things that started with the word “pretty” but I don’t need to confess those now. Let me ask you this. Do you think your life is complicated? Of course you do! Everyone thinks that. It’s why we have trouble getting any sympathy. But ... you should try to follow the day of a high school student, especially the ones with good grades and talent. See, everyone expects them to join everything and be good at everything they do. Think I’m kidding? Watch this.

SCENE 5: A Day in the Life

CHARLEY: A day ...

PARKER: A day ...

SAM: A day in the life. Of me!

CHARLEY: Of her.

PARKER: A girl.

SAM: A typical girl!

CHARLEY: Perhaps.

PARKER: Close, anyway.

SAM: From morning 'til night!

CHARLEY: The beginning and the end!

PARKER: Alpha and Omega!

SAM: Huh?

PARKER: That's Greek.

SAM: I'm lost.

CHARLEY: And that ... is just the point, Sam. It begins!

PARKER: (*imitating a loud alarm*) Riiiiiiiiiiiiing!

SAM: (*waking slowly*) Wh ... what? What?

PARKER: Riiiiiiiiing!

SAM: Okay! Okay! I heard you already!

CHARLEY: (*as the mom*) Sam! Get up!

SAM: I'm getting up.

CHARLEY: No you're not!

SAM: No, I'm not. Okay, okay Mom. (*looking in a mirror as Charley becomes her reflection*) Oh, geesh. Did I look that bad when I went to bed?

PARKER: (*as the mirror*) Yes.

CHARLEY: Sam!

SAM: Okay, okay! I'm hurrying. (*walks groggily into the shower, mimes taking off her pajamas, turns on the water, then looks at the audience*) What are all these people doing in my bathroom?

CHARLEY: Sam!

SAM: I'm coming! I'm coming! (*drying off, putting on pants, etc.*) (*shouting*) Is this Saturday?

CHARLEY: Wrong!

SAM: Just thought I'd try.

PARKER: (*as the dad*) Better get a move on, Sam.

SAM: I know, Dad. I know. I wish I could just skip school today.

PARKER: Why?

SAM: Because it's school.

PARKER: Sam, that's a terrible attitude.

CHARLEY: You used to say the same thing, Parker.

PARKER: Let's change the subject.

CHARLEY: Off you go, sweetheart! Work hard today!

SAM: I can't wait, Mom. (*walks to the bus*) The bus is always late.

CHARLEY: (*as a student*) You got your math done?

- SAM:** Oh shoot! I forgot!
- CHARLEY:** Me too. Let's run away and join the Marines.
- SAM:** Too late, Sarge. Here's the bus.
- PARKER:** (*as the bus driver*) Quiet down back there! Come on! Come on! Get on! I said to quiet down or you're all getting detentions.
- CHARLEY:** (*to Sam*) He's such a sweet bus driver.
- SAM:** He used to be a Wal-Mart greeter. I wish this day was over.
- PARKER:** Okay! Everybody out!
- CHARLEY:** (*as they exit the bus, to the driver*) Mr. Driver, I just want to say what a pleasure it's been to be in your company this morning.
- PARKER:** You tryin' to be funny?
- CHARLEY:** Yes. And it's not working.
- SAM:** (*grabbing Charley*) Let's go. (*looking around*) First hour. What've we got?
- CHARLEY:** P.E.
- SAM:** What're we playing today?
- CHARLEY:** We're watching a film, "World Peace through Dodge ball."
- SAM:** I'm thrilled. Let's go to the office.
- CHARLEY:** For what?
- SAM:** To tell them I've got an eye injury. I can't watch films.
- PARKER:** (*as the school secretary*) May I help you?
- CHARLEY:** My friend here hurt her eye on the way to school and the doctor said that if she watches a film it could blind her.
- PARKER:** Really?
- SAM:** That was so lame.
- PARKER:** Very well. Here's a pass. Go sit in the cafeteria.
- SAM:** (*sitting beside Charley*) This is better. Wonder what's for lunch?
- CHARLEY:** You can usually tell by sniffing. (*sniffs*) Johnson and Johnson?
- SAM:** They just waxed the floors.
- CHARLEY:** Oh. What'd we have yesterday?
- SAM:** I think it was some sort of plastic.
- CHARLEY:** Oh yeah, now I remember. Look! Here comes the high school boys'(girls') P. E. class. I think I'm in love.
- SAM:** You can't be. You just fell in love yesterday.
- CHARLEY:** Yeah, but I was so young back then.
- SAM:** Come on ... math class.
- PARKER:** (*as the teacher*) Pop quiz, boys and girls! Keep your eyes on your own work and absolutely no talking!
- SAM:** I saw this in a movie once. All these prisoners lining up waiting to be shot.
- CHARLEY:** For flunking math?
- SAM:** It's a cruel world.
- PARKER:** Do I hear talking?

CHARLEY: No.

SAM: No.

PARKER: Okay! Pencils down! Times up!

CHARLEY: Huh?

PARKER: A new school rule! You will be tested every ten minutes ...

SAM: What?

PARKER: ... until you die!!!!

CHARLEY: Mommy!

PARKER: Next class!

SAM: Let's go!

CHARLEY: Dad said these are the best years of my life.

SAM: Then your dad had a lousy childhood. Here we go ... the hallway between classes ... best part of the day.

PARKER: (*as a student*) (*running up to them*) Sam! Charley! Did you hear what Jessica said about Luke when Ronnie was listening, but he wasn't paying any attention because Mackenzie thought that Brittany might have heard, and it's a good thing because Brennan is really mad and Jamie says she isn't going to talk to him again but Abby said she was going to tell him anyhow and Elly overheard the whole thing and she just now told me! What're we having for lunch?

CHARLEY: Floor wax.

PARKER: Okay. (*Parker leaves.*)

SAM: Drama. That's what my life is ... one big bag of drama.

CHARLEY: Look, I gotta go to biology. See you at lunch?

SAM: Yeah. I've got art. (*Charley leaves.*) Art. I can't even draw my own name.

PARKER: Sam! Come over here! Have a seat by me!

SAM: What're we drawing today?

PARKER: Fruit. A pile of fruit. Two apples, a bunch of grapes and a peach.

SAM: What happened to the banana?

PARKER: Ask John.

SAM: The kid with the banana on his mouth?

PARKER: Yeah. He's impulsive.

SAM: He's sloppy. Why don't we just draw John with the banana on his lip? That'd be more interesting.

PARKER: It's supposed to be a "still life." John never holds still. Hey, did you hear about ...

SAM: Look, I don't want to hear any more rumors or gossip, okay? I've had enough.

PARKER: Okay. Have it your way.

SAM: What? You're not gonna tell me?

PARKER: You just said you didn't want to ...

SAM: I was lying, okay!

PARKER: Okay, so Luke and Jessica.

SAM: Hold it. The teacher's looking at us.

PARKER: Do art teachers always dress like that?

SAM: That's why they call it art.

CHARLEY: Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding! Lunch time!

PARKER: (*as all three stand in the lunch line*) What is that stuff?

CHARLEY: At least it's not moving today. Yesterday's lunch kept trying to crawl off my plate. It must have been organic.

SAM: Where we gonna sit?

PARKER: Somewhere we can escape in case there's a riot. I got twenty-seven peas. How about you?

CHARLEY: Eighteen.

SAM: You're just lucky. Are peas supposed to bounce?

PARKER: Bounce?

CHARLEY: They're still frozen.

SAM: Oh. Wanna play a game? Pea pong?

CHARLEY: Gotta go to English. I wonder if Shakespeare ever ate frozen peas? To pea or not to ...

PARKER: Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!

SAM: Geometry ...

CHARLEY: Health ...

PARKER: Social Studies ...

SAM: School's out!

ALL THREE: Ding! Ding! Ding! Ding!

PARKER: (*as the bus driver*) Settle down back there! Settle down!

CHARLEY: Good afternoon, Mr. Bus Driver. I hope you've had a lovely day.

PARKER: You tryin' to get smart, kid?

CHARLEY: Of course. I've been in school all day. (*sitting with Sam*) I see Mr. Happy Face has had a great day.

PARKER: Quiet back there!

SAM: I think he's off his medication.

PARKER: Here's your stop. See you tomorrow.

SAM: School two days in a row?

PARKER: Be strong, girl.

SAM: (*to Parker as she exits the bus*) That was truly one of the loveliest rides I've ever experienced.

PARKER: Smart aleck kid.

SAM: Hi Mom.

CHARLEY: (*as the mom*) Sam! Honey! How was your day?

SAM: Thrilling, Mom. In my whole life I've never been so excited. It was just one big event after another. I think that after today my life may be changed forever.

CHARLEY: I love it when you're funny.

PARKER: (*as the dad*) Hi sweetheart! How was school?

SAM: Why do they always ask that? Like something would actually change from day to day. Just great, Dad.

PARKER: That's my girl!

SAM: And that's my dad.

PARKER: You know, I think I'm about the luckiest guy in the whole darned world! A beautiful wife ... a lovely, talented daughter ...

SAM: I wonder what he wants.

PARKER: It'll be so great to spend an evening at home ... just the three of us.

SAM: I've got play practice...

CHARLEY: ... I've got that church meeting ...

SAM: ... then dance rehearsal ...

CHARLEY: ... then I've having supper with the girls from work ...

SAM: ... and I've got to finish my social studies map ...

PARKER: What?

SAM: See ya, Pops!

PARKER: Huh?

CHARLEY: Sorry, Honey.

PARKER: But when will I see you again?

CHARLEY: I'm not sure. How long 'til Christmas?

SAM: Okay ... made it to play practice. Oh no. I forgot something.

CHARLEY: What?

SAM: My lines.

CHARLEY: That'll make it rough. Just sort of move your mouth when we start to sing.

SAM: What about the dances?

CHARLEY: Just move your mouth.

SAM: Dance class! I'm too tired.

PARKER: (*as the dance teacher*) Okay dancers! Let's warm up! (*doing some moves*) One! Two! One! Two! One! Two! One! Two!

SAM: (*doing the moves*) When are we gonna get to three?

PARKER: That's all for tonight! Work on those steps! Recital's next week! Dis--missed!

SAM: I think I'm dead.

CHARLEY: (*as the mom*) Honey! You're home! Want some popcorn before bedtime?

SAM: I just wanna go to bed.

PARKER: (*as the dad*) Sam, your mother and I have been talking. We think we need more time together as a family. We hardly ever see you.

SAM: So I quit volleyball?

CHARLEY: Oh, no, you can't do that.

SAM: I give up dance?

PARKER: Now wait a minute ... I've invested a lot of money in your dance lessons.

SAM: Theatre.

CHARLEY: No way.

SAM: Basketball? Track? Softball? How about math? I could give that up in a minute.

PARKER: Uh ... listen, we'll talk about this in the morning.

SAM: That's what I thought.

PARKER: What?

SAM: I mean, goodnight, Dad.

PARKER: 'Night, sweetheart.

SAM: See ya in the morning, Mom.

CHARLEY: Oh, you're such a darling girl.

SAM: I know. 'Night. (*looks in the mirror as Parker becomes her reflection, rubbing her face*) Long day.

PARKER: (*as the mirror*) Tell me about it.

SAM: Maybe tomorrow will be better. Why is my mirror talking to me?

PARKER: You're tired. It's your imagination.

SAM: Oh. But it seems so real.

PARKER: You have a very active imagination.

SAM: Oh. I'm tired.

PARKER: You look it.

SAM: You know, this is the time.

PARKER: Time for what?

SAM: At the end of the day ... a time to say, "So what? Tomorrow's gonna be better! Tomorrow I'm really going to make a difference!"

PARKER: Make the world a better place!

SAM: Boldly go where no girl has gone before!

CHARLEY: (*appearing*) One small step for a girl! One giant leap for mankind!

PARKER: Faster than a speeding bullet! Able to leap tall buildings in a single bound!

SAM: To the Bat Cave!

PARKER: When you wish upon a star, makes no difference who you are!

CHARLEY: Follow the yellow brick road!

SAM: And so ...!

PARKER: Yes!

SAM: And so ... !

CHARLEY: Yes!

SAM: I'm going ...

CHARLEY & PARKER: Yes?

SAM: To bed! (*She lies down.*)

CHARLEY: A day in the life.

PARKER: A day in the life.

NARRATOR: See what I mean? It's a good thing they are young. The pace is fast and the burdens are heavy. I'm glad I was not smart and talented. Oh. Let me set the stage for this next slice-of-life. Many of our actors either previously or currently competed in speech contests. Yep, just like the football play-offs, there is competition in speech and drama. In drama, the students memorize a selection and play it before a judge. There are contests leading to state and national competition. Practice as much as you want but things don't always go as planned.

SCENE 6: This Speech Contest Has Been Cancelled

PALMER: (*entering*) That's it! Hold everything! Stop it! The speech contest has been cancelled! (*to the audience*) You folks can go home now. (*to the judge*) You can pick up your check in the office! Go ahead! Go home! Go home!

RAGAN: (*running in*) What're you doing?

PALMER: I'm cancelling the speech contest.

RAGAN: You're doing what?

PALMER: Cancelling the whole thing. It's over ... done with. Bing-bang, ya-da, ya-da, we're out of here!

RAGAN: (*to the audience*) Uh ... excuse us a moment. (*pulling Palmer aside*) Are you crazy? You can't do this!

PALMER: Oh, I'm pretty sure I can. I'm pretty sure I just did. (*to the audience*) What are you waiting for? The show's over.

RAGAN: (*to the audience*) He's/She's kidding. Would you stop that? This school is filled with kids today. You can't send everybody home. What's the matter?

PALMER: My partner.

RAGAN: What about your partner?

PALMER: He's not here. Bubba's a no-show.

RAGAN: Oh, no.

PALMER: Oh, yes. I knew this was gonna happen. He cancels every rehearsal and last night he still didn't have his lines down.

RAGAN: Maybe he's sick.

PALMER: He's not sick. He's a jerk. He did this to me last year. He came to contest and stumbled around and we got last place.

RAGAN: So why'd you pick him as a partner again?

PALMER: Because we always practice at his house and his mom makes really good pizza.

RAGAN: You're kidding.

PALMER: And he's got the biggest TV set in the world.

RAGAN: I'm not hearing this.

PALMER: And his sister/brother is really cute.

RAGAN: Oh good grief. You mean you pick Bubba for a partner but he's got no talent?

PALMER: She uses three kinds of cheese on her pizza.

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RAGAN: But he can't act?

PALMER: And his brother/sister's drop-dead gorgeous.

RAGAN: You know, you deserve this. You deserve everything you've got coming to you. You should pick a speech partner because they work hard and they're talented.

PALMER: I just found that out. *(to the audience)* Seriously folks, there's no need for you to hang around any longer.

RAGAN: Hold it! Hold it! Just because you can't perform that doesn't mean all the other kids can't compete today.

PALMER: But what's a speech contest without me?

RAGAN: A speech contest without you.

PALMER: You are doing serious damage to my ego.

RAGAN: I'm going to do serious damage to the back of your head if you don't stop this.

PALMER: Then tell me ... Just what am I supposed to do?

RAGAN: Just ... you know ... walk around, see some speeches, encourage your friends.

PALMER: Oh sure. What are you doing in contest today? "I'm doing a monologue!" "I've got a great duet!" "I'm doing poetry!" Then they look at me ... Uh ... let's see ... I got a drink at the water fountain, I found a nametag in the hallway, and I got really excited by eating a bag of popcorn that I found on the lunchroom table. Yeah. I'm having a great day.

RAGAN: Look, maybe your partner will show up at the last minute.

PALMER: It's already the last minute. Hey! Wow! Why I didn't I think of this before? I just got the greatest idea! You!

RAGAN: Me? Me? What?

PALMER: You! You're my new partner!

RAGAN: You're nuts.

PALMER: Of course I am. I'm an actor. Come on, you can do it!

RAGAN: You're out of your mind! I don't know Bubba's lines!

PALMER: You can do it! Really! I'll help you through it! I give you cues! Just follow me!

RAGAN: No way!

PALMER: We can do this! Come on! I've just got to perform at speech contest and you're my only hope! My life will be ruined if you don't say yes!

RAGAN: Ruined?

PALMER: At least dented a little.

RAGAN: But the judge ... the audience ... they'll know.

PALMER: *(stops, walks over and views the audience closely)* This group? No, I don't think so. Come on! Please! We're up next!

RAGAN: I can't ... *(but Palmer grabs Ragan and places him/her into position in front of the audience)*

PALMER: Hi. My name is Palmer Gordon and this is my partner Ragan and we are doing "A Pirate's Life," by Ben Kradbury.

RAGAN: Who?

PALMER: Just follow me. (*quickly becoming a pirate*) Oh, 'tis a stormy, stormy day, Blackliver! (*whispers*) 'Tis indeed, Captain!

RAGAN: 'Tis indeed, Captain!

PALMER: Look through your telescope, you scurvy dog! Tell me what you see!

RAGAN: (*peers through an imaginary scope*) A speech judge!

PALMER: (*aside*) No! "Her Majesty's fleet!"

RAGAN: Her Majesty's fleet!

PALMER: And what's it doing?

RAGAN: Just sitting there looking at us.

PALMER: (*aside*) Wrong! "It's coming right at us, Captain!"

RAGAN: "It's coming right at us, Captain!" And they've got swords!

PALMER: (*aside*) Cannons.

RAGAN: "Cannons!" ... and knives!

PALMER: (*aside*) Stop ad-libbing! They don't have knives!

RAGAN: Oh, no! They dropped their knives! And the water is full of whales!

PALMER: (*aside*) Sharks!

RAGAN: "Sharks!" Vicious man-eating tiger sharks!

PALMER: (*aside*) Orcas!

RAGAN: "Orcas!" The size of whales!

PALMER: Avast, Blackliver! What's that I see on the far horizon?

RAGAN: I have no idea.

PALMER: (*aside*) A typhoon!

RAGAN: A tycoon!

PALMER: (*aside*) Phoon! Phoon!

RAGAN: "Phoon! Phoon!"

PALMER: Hoist the mainsail, Blackliver!

RAGAN: The what?

PALMER: The main sail!

RAGAN: Which sail is that?

PALMER: The main one!

RAGAN: Oh. Okay! Then I'll start the motor!

PALMER: We don't have no bloody motor, you dog!

RAGAN: Someone stole our motor! Oh, Captain, whatever shall we do?

PALMER: (*aside*) Stick to the script.

RAGAN: "Stick to the script! Stick to the script!" Captain, we must hoist the main sail, look for the motor, then stick to the script before the Phoon-Phoons capture us!

PALMER: (*a long, dastardly glare at Ragan, then*) They're coming aboard!

RAGAN: The Phoon-Phoons?

PALMER: No, you bloody idiot! Her Majesty's soldiers! Quick! Grab your sword!

RAGAN: (*picks up something, cocks and fires*) Bang!

PALMER: (*another long look, then*) Your sword! Sword!

RAGAN: My sword-sword! My sword-sword! I shall stab a Phoon-Phoon with my sword-sword!

PALMER: Attack! (*and both begin sword fighting with their imaginary attackers*)

RAGAN: (*singing*) "Somewhere ... over the rainbow!"

PALMER: (*aside*) What are you doing?

RAGAN: Hey, I'm really getting into this! I should have gone out for speech years ago!

PALMER: You're ruining my duet!

RAGAN: (*as they continue to fight*) I'm having a ball! Take that, Phoon-Phoon! And that! And that!

PALMER: This is awful. I should have stayed home.

RAGAN: (*really getting into it*) Oh, thou most wretched wretch! Thou vilest of villains! Thou baddest of bad guys!

PALMER: Hey!

RAGAN: (*completely immersed in his/her pirate-ness, ignoring Palmer*) Wouldst thou like a taste of my blade? (*lunging*) Uhhh! Take that! And that! And that! Whoa! That's my sword! Thou did take that! Never fear! I shall use my faithful shotgun. Blam! Blam! Blam! But what's this? Another of her Majesty's ships! A submarine! (*pulling the pin with his/her teeth*) A depth charge! Taketh thou my hand grenade! (*looking up*) Oh, no! Jet bombers! Quick, my fellow pirates! To the anti-aircraft weapons. (*shooting the planes*) Rat-tat-tat-tat-tat!

PALMER: Hello? Anybody in there?

RAGAN: Drones! We need drones! (*dialing a cell phone*) 1-800-Drones-Are-Us! (*speaking into the phone*) Send the drones! Send the drones! Crush those Phoon-Phoons with the drone-drones! (*making noise of bombs dropping from the sky*) Take cover!

PALMER: Hey!

RAGAN: No time to talk! Hide! Hide! Cover yourself! Wait 'til they see this on CNN! Take cover men! Take cover! (*more noises of bombing*)

PALMER: (*forcefully grabbing Ragan and stopping him*) Would you stop?

RAGAN: Look at the audience! They're smiling!

PALMER: That's not humor, that's pity! (*again, as the pirate*) There! Blackliver, we have won! We have defeated the Queen's Royal Dragoons!

RAGAN: The Phoon-Phoon Dragoons?

PALMER: (*aside*) Stop ad-libbing! (*aloud*) Now! We shall rule the seas!

RAGAN: A Pirate Victory!

PALMER: The rulers of the sea!

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RAGAN: We're off to see the wizard!

PALMER: (*a long pause as Palmer stares at Ragan*) What are you doing?

RAGAN: Sorry. I got inspired. This is really fun! Let's do some more pirate stuff!

PALMER: The duet's over.

RAGAN: That was short.

PALMER: That's because you skipped over the fire, the flood, the shark attack, and the gold chest.

RAGAN: But I got in the Phoon-Phoons.

PALMER: This is so embarrassing. (*indicating the audience*) They're just looking at us.

RAGAN: Some of them are. (*pointing to an audience member*) He/She fell asleep. What about the judge?

PALMER: Just staring.

RAGAN: Staring as in, "Wow, that's really good?"

PALMER: More like, "I can't believe what I'm seeing."

RAGAN: Should we go back and get comments?

PALMER: I think I know his/her comments. "You two should be locked up." I'm finished. My whole career just floated down the drain. There's nothing left to do but quit school, rent out my room, and sell the dog.

RAGAN: Can I have the dog?

PALMER: You're no help, you know that?

RAGAN: Ever think of a career in volleyball?

PALMER: My partner probably wouldn't show up. Wait 'til I get my hands on that guy! He's gonna be walking crooked for a week.

RAGAN: (*seeing something at window in the door*) Hey ...

PALMER: I mean it. I'm never gonna speak to that jerk again! I've never been so humiliated in my life!

RAGAN: Uh ... maybe you'd better ...

PALMER: I'm the laughing stock of the speech contest! I'll never be able to show my face at school and ...

RAGAN: Hey!

PALMER: What?

RAGAN: Look out there.

PALMER: Where?

RAGAN: Outside ... in the hallway. Isn't that your partner Bubba?

PALMER: (*looking*) It couldn't be ... (*looks more closely*) It is. It's Bubba! He's got a lot of nerve showing up now. What's he saying?

RAGAN: He said that you've got the wrong room. He's been waiting for you in the right contest room. You just missed your event.

PALMER: I ... ?

RAGAN: He's been here all along. You were the one who blew it.

PALMER: (*a very long pause, then*) I think I want to go home.

RAGAN: Hey ...

PALMER: Mommy? Is my Mommy here?
(Ragan takes his arm and gently leads Palmer offstage.)

NARRATOR: I'm sure you all remember fondly the story of Cassandra in Greek mythology. Cassandra had the gift of foretelling the future ... but had the curse that no one would believe her. Still, today, there are people wandering the streets trying to find someone who can tell what's going to happen in the future. In response to the need, there are some who contend that they can tell the future and charge money for the information. Sometimes, even high school students take a shot.

SCENE 7: Weegee

BAILEY: *(entering with Cruz)* This is ridiculous. I can't do this.

CRUZ: Of course you can do it.

BAILEY: What if it doesn't work? What if people find out?
 Everybody's gonna laugh.

CRUZ: Nobody will even know, Bailey.

BAILEY: I'll bet she's a fake. Have you tried it?

CRUZ: I don't need it. You do.

BAILEY: But it sounds so spooky ... What's her name?

CRUZ: Weegee. I hear she's really good.

BAILEY: And she sees into the future? She can tell your fortune?

CRUZ: That's what everybody says.

BAILEY: Everybody?

CRUZ: Well, there was this ad in the paper.

BAILEY: An ad in the paper? You got her number from a stupid ad in the newspaper? I'm not buying a used car, Cruz! This is my life at stake here! Look, let's just go hang around the mall. I feel ridiculous going to a fortuneteller.

CRUZ: Come on, Bailey! Just give it a chance! Please? I'm your best friend. I'm just trying to help you. *(looking around)* This looks like the place. Yeah ... that's the right address. Go ahead and knock.

BAILEY: You do it. I feel silly enough. What if you open the door and bats start flying out?

CRUZ: Then duck. Okay, here goes ... *(knocks on an imaginary door)*

WEEGEE: *(opening the door quickly)* Who are you?

BAILEY: We're outa here.

CRUZ: What?

BAILEY: If she was a real fortune teller she'd know who we were.

WEEGEE: You have come to know your future!

CRUZ: I told you!

BAILEY: That doesn't mean ...

WEEGEE: Come in! Come in! Come into the parlor of the great and mysterious Weegee!

BAILEY: She creeps me out.

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