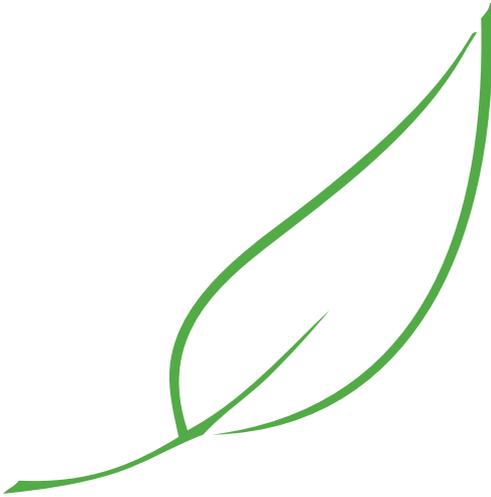


Integrity

By Renee J. Clark



GREEN ROOM PRESS

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INTEGRITY

A DRAMA IN TWO ACTS

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SYNOPSIS: Based on a true story, this unsettling drama discusses cheating in school on stage. Robbie, who appears to be a model “A” student, has actually cheated his way to the top of the class. Although his peers and friends have been aware of his cheating for years, young people have an understood code of silence: friends do not rat on friends regardless of the consequences. This code becomes a serious issue as both teachers and students are confronted with the meaning of personal integrity and the difficult, often painful choices that must be made.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(6 male, 6 female, 1 either, extras)

- DAVE (m).....A good student who works very hard for everything he gets, including his good grades. *(27 lines)*
- WAYNE (m)Dave’s close friend. He is good-natured and loves to horse around. He likes to be the center of attention. *(33 lines)*
- ADAM (m).....Extremely lazy, he constantly looks for the easy way out. Popular with the girls, he is also very manipulative and used to getting his own way. *(28 lines)*
- FRANK (m)A very serious student, he tends to accept the bad with the good a bit too easily. *(23 lines)*
- ROB (m)Outwardly, he appears to be a model student, conscientious and hard-working. However, although he is very bright, he puts too much pressure on himself to be “number one”. Because of his extreme ambition, he uses his charm and cleverness to cheat his way to the top of the class. *(30 lines)*

- AMY (f)Also a hard-working “A” student. She gets her good grades through hard work and honesty and resents those who cheat at her expense. *(21 lines)*
- CHRISTY (f)A “B” student. She is a born leader. Popular with everyone, she becomes the conscience of the group. She is not afraid to ‘tell it like it is’. *(21 lines)*
- CARA (f)Because of her need to be accepted by others, she can be easily persuaded into going against her better judgement, especially by Adam. *(40 lines)*
- JENNA (f).....Basically lazy and a “C-D” student. Although she wants to do well in school, her priorities are boys and sports. *(17 lines)*
- JACKIE (f).....Jenna’s best friend. She is even lazier than Jenna. Unfortunately, she doesn’t think about the consequences of her actions. *(12 lines)*
- EXTRAS (m/f).....Additional students may be used to make the class larger on stage. They should ad-lib reactions along with the others in the various scenes.

THE TEACHERS

- MARTY HENDRICKS (m/f)This role may be played by either a male or female, dialogue can be adjusted accordingly. Marty has only been teaching for a few years and is still a bit naive, but extremely bright. *(103 lines)*
- DIANE LANG (f).....She has been teaching about 15 years and is still enthusiastic about teaching. She appreciates the fresh outlook Marty Hendricks brings to their sessions in the lounge. *(29 lines)*

MIKE PARSONS (m).....Mike has been teaching 30 long years and is looking forward to retirement. He is very 'savvy' and often typecasts students based on first impressions. Unfortunately, this has given him a somewhat jaded and cynical outlook. He tends to quote the classics as he expects the worst in a situation and views his profession as a constant battle between teachers and students. *(30 lines)*

NOTE:

As rehearsals progress, various ideas will surface...if they work, by all means use them.

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES**ACT ONE**

SCENE 1: Benches outside the classroom where students gather before and after school

SCENE 2: The teachers' lounge.

SCENE 3: The classroom.

SCENE 4: Benches outside the classroom where students gather before and after school.

SCENE 5: The teachers' lounge.

SCENE 6: The classroom.

SCENE 7: Benches outside the classroom where students gather before and after school.

ACT TWO

SCENE 1: The teachers' lounge.

SCENE 2: The classroom.

SCENE 3: The teachers' lounge.

SCENE 4: The classroom.

SETTING

In and around any typical middle, junior or senior high school.

TIME: The present.

SET

Staging this play is simple and flexible. There are three separate scenes which rotate throughout the play: the classroom, the benches outside the school, and the teachers' lounge. If an auditorium is used, the classroom scene, with portable chalkboard, could remain on the stage proper, while the benches and teachers' lounge could be set in front of the curtain. Benches should be arranged down right. Card table and three chairs for lounge scene are down left. If a classroom is used, desks should be arranged according to the diagram and the benches and lounge scene moved on and off from down in front.

NOTE:

The students' chairs and desks face the fairly wide center aisle. Speaking roles must be seated according to the chart. Other desks may be filled by extras in non-speaking roles.

COSTUMES

Modern. Students should wear their usual school clothes and teachers should dress professionally. Perhaps Mike Parsons could wear a funny bow tie.

PROPS

- Students** Backpacks, book bags, notebooks, pencils, and other school paraphernalia.
- Dave** Walkman with headphones.
- Rob** Pen.

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Teachers Three coffee cups on card table.

Hendricks Folder #1 with miscellaneous papers, including the criteria for the award nominations.

One set of diagram quizzes to be passed back in class.

Lunch bag.

Paper listing the nominees for English.

Folder #2 containing a set of dittos for the pop quiz in Act One, Scene 6. Ten sentences with blank lines to the left is sufficient.

One letter identifying the “cheater” and one letter returned with the walkman.

Folder #3 marked ‘Literature Exam’ containing a set of dittos for the big exam (paper with blank lines down the left margin will work), one phony answer key and one real answer key.

Lang Paper listing the nominees for math

Parsons Newspaper and wrist watch.

*The following sentence and diagram should appear on the board for Act One, Scene 3. Copies of the same should be made for the quizzes which are passed back to the students.

Several boys (on the team) and six pretty cheerleaders were photographed (in front) (of the school) and then interviewed (by a newspaper reporter).

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

Two benches are arranged down right. They represent any area outside the classroom where students gather before and after school. It is Tuesday morning, students are gossiping in clusters, brimming with energy. Dave is seated on one of the benches. He takes an expensive new walkman out of his backpack, just as his friends, Frank and Wayne, enter.

DAVE: Hey, guys, look what I got!

FRANK: *(Examining the walkman)* Wow! It's that new walkman from Technocor. Geez, these things cost a fortune.

DAVE: Tell me about it. I've only been saving money from my paper route for six months.

WAYNE: *(Grabbing it out of Frank's hands)* Lemme see it. *(He fiddles with the knobs.)*

FRANK: How much did it cost?

DAVE: One hundred and eighty dollars. *(To Wayne)* Go ahead, try it. It's fully programmable. *(Showing him)* Here's the treble and base, equalizer, volume. There's already a disk in it.

WAYNE: *(Putting on headset)* WOW!! *(He listens, closes his eyes, and begins dancing around the benches singing to the music, off key, of course, and very loud. The boys laugh.)*

Adam and Cara enter. They stop and stare at Wayne's gyrations, shaking their heads.

ADAM: What's with him? He looks spastic...or something.

CARA: He SOUNDS like a sick cow. *(Wayne keeps up his routine, oblivious to the conversations around him. He 'plays' the guitar, hilariously jerking back and forth.)*

FRANK: He's just trying out Dave's new walkman.

ADAM: *(Interested.)* You mean the one they keep advertising?

DAVE: That's the one. I've been saving money for months, and finally, I saved enough money to buy it. *(Wayne sings even louder.)*

CARA: *(She covers her ears and groans)* Will someone please shut him up! My ears can't take this abuse.

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ADAM: *(Laughing)* He looks like a chicken. Look at that. *(He points at Wayne and makes chicken noises as everyone laughs.)*

During this bit of fun, Jackie, Rob, Jenna, Amy, and Christy wander in. They stand upstage and stare numbly at Wayne who is now center stage.

CARA: *(To Frank)* Frank, you better stop him. He's starting to draw a crowd.

FRANK: Yeah, I guess I better. We don't want anyone to think 'ol Wayne is crazy, do we?

DAVE: THINK he's crazy? I KNOW he's crazy! *(To Wayne)* Wayne! *(His eyes still closed, Wayne is oblivious)* Hey, Wayne! *(There is still no response. Dave looks at Frank. They both stand, cross to either side of the twirling Wayne, then together they grab him.)*

DAVE AND FRANK: *(Shouting.)* Wayne!

WAYNE: *(Screams)* Aaahhh! *(Clutching his heart)* Don't scare me like that. *(He suddenly notices everyone staring at him)* Hey, what's going on? What's everyone looking at?

They all laugh.

DAVE: Let's go, Wayne. Time for English. Hand over my walkman.

WAYNE: *(Reluctantly)* Aw, can't I listen to one more song? *(To the others)* Sure, buddy, we understand. Now give the toy back to Davey, it doesn't belong to you.

Wayne playfully whimpers as Dave pries his fingers off the walkman. Everyone laughs with amusement.

CARA: Come on, guys. We only have a few minutes to get to class. I don't want to be late. *(They all exit right. Wayne follows Dave with his hands out begging for the walkman, making comic whimpering sounds.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

A card table is set down left with three chairs representing the teachers' lounge. Parsons, who has been teaching thirty years, reads a newspaper. Lang is correcting papers. Both are drinking coffee. Marty Hendricks enters left.

HENDRICKS: Hi, mind if I join you?

PARSONS: Not at all. How goes the battle?

HENDRICKS: I'm having a pretty good semester, so far. The kids seem to be holding their own. There are the usual goof-offs, but so far the others seem to be doing quite well.

LANG: Marty, did you get that notice from the Chamber of Commerce about the awards program?

HENDRICKS: Yes. *(She shuffles through her papers)* I have it here.

LANG: Did you pick your three nominees?

HENDRICKS: Yes, I planned to announce it next period. Have you picked your nominees for math?

LANG: I'm having trouble with it.

PARSONS: *(Folding newspaper.)* Why? What's the big deal? I nominated for Social Studies last year, and it wasn't that difficult. I just used the same technique my students use on tests. I just close my eyes and let my finger do the pick a name out of my grade book.

LANG: Oh, Mike, stop teasing. *(To Marty)* Have you really looked at the criteria carefully? It's not just for the highest grades, you know.

HENDRICKS: Sure. *(She reads aloud from the paper)* The student must have the highest academic average in English and demonstrate a positive attitude, responsibility, and integrity. So what?

LANG: It's the part about integrity that's tough.

HENDRICKS: What do you mean?

PARSONS: Diane is hard pressed to find even one student with integrity, isn't that right?

HENDRICKS: You're not serious.

LANG: No, Mike is exaggerating. There are plenty of kids with integrity. It's just difficult to find three that meet all four requirements.

PARSONS: You mean those who have demonstrated integrity or responsibility might not have the high grades.

LANG: Yes, and some with a high grade point average might have integrity but possess a negative attitude. The choices are not easy. I want to be sure that when I put my name to a recommendation it's the right one.

HENDRICKS: I see what you mean. Well, I think I know my students pretty well.

PARSONS: Don't be too sure of yourself, Marty. Sometimes kids are not what they seem.

HENDRICKS: I'm confident with my choices, Mike.

PARSONS: *(Looking at his watch)* Uh-oh. It's that time again. *(He rises and raises his cup to the others)* Forward, all, into the trenches! *(He takes one last sip and puts the cup down. They exit laughing.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

English class is half over. The students are doing exercises in their grammar notebooks. Hendricks is finishing a large diagram on the chalkboard. Her back is to the class. See diagram for seating arrangement. Adam nudges Cara in front of him. He motions that he wants to see her paper. She tries to argue with him. He starts to get louder. Rather than make a fuss and draw the teacher's attention to them, she gives him her paper, which he promptly starts to copy.

WAYNE: *(Making sure Hendricks isn't looking, he whispers across to Dave)* Sssst! Dave. *(He is ignored)* Dave!

DAVE: *(Whispers back)* What?!

WAYNE: *(Pointing to the walkman on the desk)* Lemme see it, just for a minute.

DAVE: Here. Now leave me alone. *(Sighing, he starts to hand the walkman across the aisle when the teacher turns around and catches them.)*

HENDRICKS: Dave, what is that? *(She crosses to them and takes the walkman.)*

DAVE: It's my new walkman, Mrs. Hendricks. I just got it yesterday.

HENDRICKS: Dave, is this the time to be fooling around with toys?

WAYNE: It's my fault Mrs. Hendricks. See, I just wanted to HOLD it a while. *(The others who have been watching the exchange start to giggle)* I wasn't gonna play it or anything.

HENDRICKS: You know you're not supposed to have these at school. They're a distraction.

DAVE: Sorry, Mrs. Hendricks. I'll leave it home tomorrow, I promise.

HENDRICKS: *(Handing it back)* Very well. But I don't want to see it again or it will become the property of the front office. Understood?

DAVE: Yes, ma'am. *(Glaring at Wayne, he puts the walkman on the floor next to his desk where the audience can see it.)*

HENDRICKS: *(Crossing back to the front of the class)* Okay, class. Your assignment for tonight is to finish these exercises you've already started and also do the next four. *(As the class writes down the assignment, Hendricks passes back a set of quizzes)* These are the quizzes you took yesterday. The correct answers are on the board. Remember to get full credit; you have to show your work on the sentences, separating out the parts of speech before you diagram it.

The students study their papers comparing them to the answers on the board

ROB: *(Whispering to Frank)* What'd you get?

FRANK: A "94".

ROB: *(Turning around to Christy)* Christy, what did you get?

CHRISTY: A "92". What's your grade?

ROB: A "90". But I think Hendricks made a mistake.

FRANK: *(Sarcastically)* Yeah, right. *(Christy shakes her head knowingly at Frank.)*

JENNA: *(To Jackie)* I flunked this.

JACKIE: I got a "D". To my parents that's the same as flunking.

JENNA: But I actually studied for this quiz.

JACKIE: *(Brushing it off)* Oh, well...

JENNA: *(Muttering)* This really ticks me off. *(She raises her hand.)*

Mrs. Hendricks.

HENDRICKS: Yes, Jenna.

JENNA: I flunked this quiz.

HENDRICKS: Yes, Jenna.

JENNA: I mean, I flunked it BIG TIME.

HENDRICKS: Yes, Jenna. I'm aware of that.

JENNA: *(Whining)* What'll I do? I just don't get this stuff!

HENDRICKS: What do you think you should do?

JENNA: I'm trying. I really am.

Amy raises her hand.

HENDRICKS: Amy.

AMY: Jenna, why not go in for extra help. You do give extra help, don't you, Mrs. Hendricks?

HENDRICKS: Of course, any time after school.

JENNA: But I can't come after school. I have basketball practice.
(*To Jackie*) What about you Jackie?

JACKIE: I have practice, too, remember.

HENDRICKS: I'm afraid that's the only time available, Jenna. You know, one of two sessions should clear up any problems you have understanding this.

AMY: (*To Jenna*) Jen, I could use some help, too. I only got a "C" on this quiz. I'll go with you.

JENNA: But what about practice? I'm not supposed to miss.

JACKIE: Yeah, Jenna, if you miss practice, you won't be able to play in Saturday's game.

JENNA: Great. I don't know what to do.

HENDRICKS: Jenna, it sounds like you have a choice to make. A difficult one.

Rob raises his hand.

HENDRICKS: Rob?

ROB: Mrs. Hendricks, I think you made a mistake on my quiz.

HENDRICKS: Oh? (*She crosses to his desk. She closely examines his paper, comparing it to the answer on the board.*) Oh, yes. You left out the helping verb on the diagram.

ROB: (*Politely*) Yes, but look here. (*He points to his paper*) On the sentence I DID underline it twice. I did show the work. I must have carelessly left it out off the diagram.

HENDRICKS: (*Pause.*) I see. (*She studies the paper closely*) Well, I guess you did have the correct answer up here. Go ahead, add in five more points. But next time, check your work, (*To the others*) you ALL need to remember to check your work carefully!

ROB: Thank you, Mrs. Hendricks. (*To Christy and Frank*) Now, it's a "95." (*Frank just shakes his head and scowls.*)

HENDRICKS: Are there any more questions? (*Silence*) Now I have an important announcement. This year the Chamber of Commerce is having a special awards ceremony to honor the top English and Math students in our school. The winners will receive a \$250 check and will be honored at a special luncheon.

AMY: (*Raising her hand*) Is this the same contest they had in Social Studies and Science last year?

HENDRICKS: Yes, it is. (*To Rob*) Rob, didn't you win once before?

ROB: Yes, two years ago I won the science award and the year before that the citizenship award.

AMY: You mean a person can win more than once?

HENDRICKS: Yes, if he or she is nominated by a teacher.

AMY: Oh.

HENDRICKS: Anyway, I have been asked to submit three nominations based on the committee's criteria. (*She picks up the letter and reads from it*) "The student must maintain the highest academic averages in the class. They must also demonstrate a positive attitude, responsibility, and integrity." I have tentatively nominated Frank, Amy, and Rob; they have the top three averages and appear to satisfy the other criteria. (*The students react, congratulating each other. They tend to ignore Rob*) However, this is TENTATIVE. These nominations could change based on the results of Friday's literature exam. My recommendations do not have to be turned in to the Chamber until next Monday.

ROB: You mean the scores on that test can make a difference in your final recommendation?

HENDRICKS: You bet. So you better study hard for this one. It's not an easy test, people.

JENNA: (*Raising her hand*) Uh, Mrs. Hendricks?

HENDRICKS: Yes, Jenna.

JENNA: I think I WILL come in for extra help. Is Thursday okay?

HENDRICKS: Thursday is fine. I think you made a wise choice.

AMY: I'm coming, too, Mrs. Hendricks.

HENDRICKS: (*To Jackie*) Jackie? What have you decided?

JACKIE: Sorry, Mrs. Hendricks. I'm going to practice.

HENDRICKS: Fine. *(To class)* Okay, everybody. Class is dismissed. *(They start to pack up their books)* Make sure you've got the rest of tonight's assignment before you leave.

The class begins to filter out. Dave leaves the walkman behind. Adam is the only student left in the room. Hendricks's back is to him as she erases the board. Adam looks cautiously to make sure no one can see what he's about to do. Then, he snatches the walkman and quickly stashes it in his backpack. He exits quickly. A few seconds later Dave rushes back in looking for his walkman. He checks under his seat and the surrounding desks. He begins to panic.

DAVE: Oh, no!

HENDRICKS: *(Turning away from the board)* Something the matter, Dave?

DAVE: My walkman – it's gone! When I realized I left it behind, I came right back, but it's not here!

HENDRICKS: You've looked everywhere?

DAVE: *(Miserably)* Mrs. Hendricks, I think someone took it. *(Angrily)* I worked six months to buy that walkman, and now it's gone! I never should have brought it to school. Now what do I do?

HENDRICKS: Now, Dave, this may all be quite innocent. If you like, I'll make an announcement to the class tomorrow. Maybe someone borrowed it or knows where it is.

DAVE: Yeah, sure, Mrs. Hendricks. Thanks. *(He saunters offstage, mumbling)* I never should have brought it to school.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

Later that day. Adam and Cara enter left, arguing. Cara marches in first and heads for the benches, Adam not far behind.

ADAM: I don't see what you're so upset about. You ALWAYS let me copy your work. What's the big deal?

CARA: Look, Adam, if Hendricks caught us, we'd both be in big trouble.

ADAM: She's not going to catch us.

CARA: All right. It's more than that. It's just that lately you NEVER seem to do ANY homework, and I'm always doing it all the time.

ADAM: So? I thought you liked doing it.

CARA: Give me a break. I don't like doing homework any more than you do. I feel like you are using me, Adam. It started out where I let you copy what you didn't finish. Then you would change the answers to match mine. Now it's always the whole paper.

ADAM: Awww, come on, Cara. I don't ask you THAT much. Besides, it's only cause I'm so busy after school. Lately, I don't have time. And you don't want me to flunk, do you?

CARA: No.

ADAM: Did you already finish today's work?

CARA: Yes.

ADAM: Well, can I borrow it? *(Pause)* Please? *(He flirts, getting her to smile)* Pretty please?

CARA: *(Relenting)* Oh, okay, but don't let anyone see you copy it. *(She gives him the paper.)*

ADAM: Never fear, m'dear! And...since you are so good to me...I'll let you use my brand new walkman! *(He winks it out of his backpack.)*

CARA: Oh my God! This is Dave's! *(Sharply)* You took it. You did, didn't you. Oh, Adam, how could you do this – steal from a friend?!

ADAM: Now hold on a minute. Did you actually SEE me take it?

CARA: Well, no, but—

ADAM: Then what you don't know for sure won't hurt you, right? Besides, how do you know I didn't buy this myself? *(He hands her the walkman.)*

CARA: (*Hesitates*) I don't know, Adam. I –

ADAM: Relax. It's all under control. You have no proof this is Dave's. And you wouldn't rat on my anyway 'cause you love me, and when you love someone you stick by them, right?

CARA: I guess so.

ADAM: Good. (*He shoves the walkman in her bag*) Enjoy it. I'll see you tomorrow. (*He exits leaving her alone on the bench, contemplating.*)

Enter Rob, Christy, Wayne, Frank and Amy. They are talking about the contest.

ROB: Frank, Amy, I just want you to know I'll be studying all night. I intend to get the highest grade on that exam. I'm gonna win the \$250 and the Algebra contest, too.

FRANK: We'll see, Rob.

AMY: Yeah, Rob. You never know. We may give you a good run for your money.

ROB: I expect you to. After all, healthy competition is good, right?

FRANK: Sure, Rob.

ROB: Well, I got a date with the library. See you later. (*He exits.*)

AMY: (*Watching him leave*) He just galls me.

FRANK: I know what you mean.

CHRISTY: That really burns me up. (*They cross to where Cara is sitting*) Mrs. H nominates HIM! She actually thinks Rob has integrity. What a joke! It's just not fair.

CARA: What's not fair?

CHRISTY: That Rob. He's so competitive it makes me sick.

CARA: What's wrong with being competitive?

FRANK: Nothing, Cara. It's just that Rob, smart as he might be, is a first class cheater.

CARA: You're kidding. He's got straight "A's". Why does he need to cheat?

AMY: That's just it. He IS really smart. But he's actually more of an "A-"student. He gets "A's" by giving himself an edge – he cheats.

WAYNE: Yeah, he's been doing it for years. I remember him cheating on quizzes and tests as far back as 5th grade.

CARA: Wow! I never would have guessed. How does he do it?

FRANK: He's really slick. On today's quiz he changed an answer just enough to mislead Mrs. H, and she gave him the extra points 'cause she trusts him.

WAYNE: Yeah. Rob knows how to lie and charm all the teachers. They trust him, period. He can fool them every time and get away with it.

CARA: And he's never been caught?

WAYNE: Once, a teacher in 7th grade got wise. But when he told the principal, nothing was done.

CHRISTY: Not enough proof.

AMY: And, of course, since all the teachers but LOVE Rob and TRUST him, the whole case was dropped.

CHRISTY: The thing that bothers me is that it's not fair to the rest of us, especially Frank and Amy.

CARA: What do you mean?

WAYNE: She means that for years Rob has received all of the recognition, awards, high class standing. He always seems to come in first. And Amy and Frank, who work hard and are very honest...well, they get beat out every time. All because Rob cheats. It gives him an unfair advantage when he competes.

CHRISTY: He's cheated his way to the top all these years, and he cheats in order to stay there.

CARA: *(To Frank)* Doesn't that make you mad?

FRANK: Sure, but there's nothing I can do about it.

AMY: It's been going on so long; we're just used to it.

CARA: Well, why don't you two cheat? At least it would make it harder on Rob.

FRANK: *(He and Amy look at each other)* Cara, don't you realize if I did that I'd be no better than Rob? I, at least, have a conscience. He obviously doesn't.

AMY: Besides, Cara, sooner or later it'll catch up with him. Do you know he wants to be a doctor? He'll get caught in medical school. And they'll kick him out for sure.

CHRISTY: *(Still angry)* People who cheat like Rob are lowlifes as far as I'm concerned. They are selfish and egotistical and don't care about anyone but themselves.

WAYNE: Yeah, they're the kind who are willing to lie, cheat, and use others to get what they want.



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