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At the end of each script is a list of what is included in the Production Packet for that show.

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TROUBLE AT THE TALENT SHOW

An Audience Participation Mystery

by

Eileen Moushey

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ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Playwrights, more than any other kind of writer, rely on the talents of others. Until a play is actually performed it's impossible to tell what works and what doesn't. Before publishing TROUBLE AT THE TALENT SHOW and adding it to our catalog, I had immense help from two very special groups.

The first is the original cast from Lake High School in Uniontown, Ohio under the direction of Steve Mitchell. This talented group of young people began with my draft, helped develop the characters, and basically provided a workshop for the script. And they were very good about finding plot "holes" for me to patch!

The second production was done by students at St. Vincent-St. Mary High School in Akron, Ohio (as a side note, LeBron James is among their alumni). Under the direction of Gerard Neary, a talented actor himself, the St. V/St. M cast added all kinds of wonderful touches, especially with portions of the dialogue.

With sincere thanks to all,

Eileen Moushey

CAST OF CHARACTERS

Many groups have specific requirements in casting - they need a certain number of each gender. After securing permission from us, you may gender-switch any role to make it work for you. Also, many groups want large casts. That is why the "gangs" described below include "others." You don't absolutely need them, but if you need to expand the cast, you can.

THE TEACHERS

SHERYL PARKER-BANKS - The music teacher and show choir director. It's Miss Parker-Banks that puts the Talent Show together. She is a charter member of the National Association Of Choir Directors (NACD). The kids call her "P.B.," but her dialogue is listed as SHERYL. Wearing a jumper.

MARK CROUCH-WINSTON - The English/Drama teacher and director of the school play. He works in collaboration with P.B. which has inspired a lot of rivalry. Mr. Crouch-Winston considers himself an expert on serious drahhh-ma. He's known as "C-Dub" (for "W"), but his dialogue is listed as MARK.

THE TIFFANYS

TIFFANY (ONE) CUMMINS - A senior, Tiffany is the ultimate "in" girl. She has an unbroken streak as Homecoming Queen, Head Cheerleader, Class President, etc.. If there is something to run for, Tiffany does. And wins. Her parents are very wealthy and she is dressed in the latest. Tiffany is ambitious, and extremely shallow. Tiffany has developed her own language - Tiff-speak. (See Glossary.) **TIFFANY TWO** - A Tiff-clone.

TIFFANY THREE - Another Tiff-clone.

THE OTHER TIFFANYS - Optional added characters. All are (of course) named Tiffany, and all are female (unless you are REALLY adventurous!) The Other Tiffanys, including TWO and THREE, are almost indistinguishable from each other in hairstyle and dress. They all use Tiff-speak.

THE JOCKS

TROY MCMANUS - The male version of Tiffany, though with a considerably lower I.Q. and a MUCH nicer personality. Captain of the Football Team, Troy is self-absorbed, but in an innocent kind of way. He has a sweet streak, which is fully exploited by Tiffany. They are a longstanding “couple.” (It’s a lot of fun to “go against” type when casting Troy by using an actor who is smallish and slight.)

TONY - Troy’s friend and teammate. He’s obviously brighter than Troy - which is not a hard reach.

DINK - Another Jock and also brighter than Troy.

THE OTHER JOCKS - Optional added characters. Troy’s gang can be guys or gals. Can include representatives from every sport. Like Tony and Dink, they are all good friends of Troy and “watch his back” out of loyalty. They are not that fond of Tiffany and don’t like the influence she has over him. Dressed in a variety of athletic uniforms. Have nicknames like Chip, Dirk, Linc, Biff, etc.

THE GRUNGIES

JANIS “EYEBALL” DIEBEL - The rebel, burnout, grunge queen - whatever is the current description for the ultimate “outsider.” Constantly in trouble at school, Janis is the kid who - in the movies - always turns out to have all kinds of hidden talents. With Janis, those talents are hidden really, really well. Janis is wearing clothes from The Gap inside out, with labels showing and The Gap price tags still attached. (These can be made rather than using the real thing.) All the Grungies wear clothes that have been slashed with scissors.

TATTOO - JANIS’ good friend and a die-hard Grungie. Can be male or female.

BADGER - Another Grungie. Female.

THE OTHER GRUNGIES - Optional added characters. Janis’ gang. More than any other group, they have been the victims of the Tiffanys’ meanness but don’t take it meekly. Can be played by girls or boys or a combination. THE OTHER GRUNGIES are wearing mostly black clothes, also inside out, can also still have price tags attached but NOT from the The Gap. All will have been enhanced with numerous slashings. Their hair is spiked, shaved in spots, colored bizarrely, and scattered throughout are teeny weenie pigtails, secured with barettes. Or anything else you want to do to make them stand out. The Grungies all have nicknames: Stickpin, Scuzzy, Liver, Toenail, etc

THE REGS

EMILY MIDDLETON - The ultimate “ordinary” teen. A junior, Emily is not a cheerleader and is average in everything. Average athlete, average student, average-looking, etc.. Not hated, but not very popular either. The only thing that really distinguishes her is her reluctant leadership of The REGS (the “regular” kids) and her computer expertise. Anyone needing computer help comes to her. Emily has a huge crush on Troy.

TARAS and BULBA - These are exchange students from some un-identified Eastern European country. Their last names are unpronounceable so they don't even bother giving them. They are inseparable and indistinguishable.. Can be played by guys or gals, or one of each.

TOM CREWS - Due to his unfortunate name and small stature, Tom has been the butt of jokes ever since kindergarten. He’s got some real anger management problems and will fight back, loudly - which everyone thinks is really cute.

MADISON WINTERS - Madison has a love-hate relationship with the Tiffanys. She was an original member of their clique until they decided that they would limit their group to girls named Tiffany. She’s always half-convinced that someday they’ll welcome her back, but in the meantime she hangs with the Regs.

THE OTHER REGS - Optional added characters. Unlike the other gangs, this clique is very loose and fluid. They can be male or female. They have very normal, mainstream names like Beth, Colleen, Mike, Andrew, etc.

THE LUNCH LADIES

EDITH PLATT - With her twin Martha, Edith is a Leader of the Lunch Ladies. A truly nice, sweet, and caring lady, Edith is very naive, a huge supporter of the school, and loves her “kids.” The only thing that’s remarkable about her appearance are her heavy eyebrows and a rather large mole on her left upper lip. Wears a food-service uniform sensible shoes and hair net.

MARTHA PLATT - Edith’s twin and also a Lunch Lady. Unlike Edith, Martha is bitter about her life and takes it out on the students. Sharp, caustic and scornful, almost everyone avoids Martha as much as they can. She is dressed exactly like Edith and also has heavy eyebrows and a large mole on her RIGHT upper lip. She carries a large handbag and is never seen without her ever-present Coke.

BETTY - Another Lunch Lady.

WILMA - Another Lunch Lady.

THE OTHER LUNCH LADIES - Optional added characters. All, including Betty and Wilma are dressed in food service uniforms and wear hair nets. They have old-fashioned names: Bertha, Charlotte, Matilda, etc. ALL the Lunch Ladies have spatulas tucked in their belts. All are female - again, unless you plan on getting very daring!

THE MAINTENANCE GUYS/GALS

GUNTHER ERICKSON - The leader of The Maintenance Guys. Gunther is older, grey, grizzled and cranky. He argues about any job he’s given, demands to see the requisition and actually does the repair when he feels like it. No one intimidates Gunther - he became a MG the week after he graduated from the high school. He practically lives in the furnace room to guard the rock salt used for the sidewalks. Dressed in coveralls, with tool belt and key loop on a retractable holder. But unlike the other MAINTENANCE GUYS, Gunther doesn’t have any keys.

DANA MOSBACHER - A Maintenance Girl or Guy. (Referred to in the script as “she”.) Dana is Gunther’s second-in-command and equally dedicated to doing what she darn-well pleases when it comes to maintaining the building. Her specialty is coming up with temporary fixes for things to avoid really fixing them - she’s a whiz with duct tape. Also dressed in coveralls, with rolls of different colored duct tape at her waist, instead of a tool belt. Has keys on a retractable holder.

TANK - Another MG. Male.

THE OTHER MAINTENANCE GUYS/GALS - Optional added characters. All are dressed in variations of maintenance gear, with tool belts. They, all, including Dana and Tank, have big key rings, the kind on a retractable reel. They have names like Stan, Jake, and Hank. Even the girls.

CAMEO ROLE

LIBRARIAN - there’s one comic “bit” for a librarian in the play which is done from the audience. She (or he) also has an important bit of business - giving Martha an unopened Coke when called upon.

GENERAL PRODUCTION NOTES

The evening is billed as an all-school Talent Show. If being performed by a high school, you could use the name of your school or a fictitious one.

The script will refer to the “stage” and TROUBLE can be done in a traditional theatre setting. But it can also be done anywhere that has a playing area visible to all. In a non-theatre setting, some of the exits/entrances will mean leaving the room, as there is no backstage.

We usually have the audience grouped into teams of detectives (6 - 8 works best). This can be done ahead of time through ticketing. Encouraging groups to buy tickets together sets up teams. Or the seating can determine the teams, using rows or partial rows. If being performed as dinner theatre, each table is a team. While you can do the show as an individual or couple event, we’ve found that teams are a lot more fun. If you decide to produce and order production materials, you will receive a Production Manual. It covers different ways to do logistics, including teams and how to include food - dinner, or dessert - into the event.

There is no set for TROUBLE AT THE TALENT SHOW, although decorating as for a “Variety Show” is a lot of fun. Using things like mylar “rain” curtain, a huge sign with the school’s name and “All-School Talent Show” adds a lot.

The talent acts are song parodies. A CD will be provided with the scripts. Most of the songs have been transposed to a lower key to accommodate those who can’t quite hit the high notes in some of our opera parodies! On the CD there are two tracks of each song. The first includes a vocal, to illustrate how the lyrics fit. The second track is just the keyboard accompaniment, which you can use for your performance. Or you can recreate it yourselves - although we do not provide sheet music. Because the songs are in the public domain, there is no problem with copyright. Also included in the Production Packet are the lyrics (in single page form) and hints for how to do each.

If you prefer, you can insert your own talent acts, although some lines will need to be changed. (Remember that we allow line changes, BUT YOU MUST SECURE PERMISSION.)

Within the script, you will see references to the PRODUCTION PACKET. Everything in the Packet is sent electronically. It includes complete instructions for things which are only briefly described in the script.

PART ONE - PRELUDE TO THE DASTARDLY DEED

As the audience members enter, there will be posters on the door identifying the event.

Welcome to the
ALL-HIGH SCHOOL TALENT SHOW!

A program for the event will be passed out. It lists the participants.

The following describes what the actors do during pre-show. You may discover other confrontations which will help establish the characters and their relationship to each other. All characters are wearing nametags.

SHERYL PARKER-BANKS and MARK CROUCH-WINSTON are circulating together, with clipboards, trying to enlist participants to fill-in for some acts which have cancelled. If audience members attempt to sign up, they will be asked what they plan to do. If it’s musical, SHERYL will be very excited and say that, though a lot of people have signed up, she’ll try to fit them in. MARK is dismissive of anything musical, and tries to get them to do a Shakespearean scene instead.

TIFFANY ONE is circulating with THE OTHER TIFFANYS and encouraging everyone to vote for them, even though the talent show hasn’t even started yet. She has her very own vocabulary (see Glossary) and the THE OTHER TIFFANYS are sometimes called upon to translate. She also loses no opportunity to put down other NonTiffany people. She’ll move from one group to a new one, where she’ll point out and mock the group she just left. She also orders TROY to campaign for her. She even gives him a “Tiffanys Are Talent Queens” sign to carry.

TROY obediently follows TIFFANY'S orders, although THE JOCKS point out that he could be swaying votes away from them. So instead of holding up the sign, he clutches it against his chest, covering the lettering with his hands. TIFFANY will not be pleased. EMILY tries to engage him in conversation, but is dragged away by the REGS who don't know what she sees in him. When TROY is talking to members of the audience, EMILY will interrupt him with really awkward questions about homework, or classes, or what's on the cafeteria menu for the next week. Despite these frequent interactions, each time it's like TROY never met her before - although he's always very nice. He calls her "Emma," "Evelyn," or "Ellen" and gives her TIFFANY'S sign and asks her to walk around with it. It's obvious during circulating that THE JOCKS don't like TIFFANY much.

JANIS is hanging (or, as TIFFANY would say, "tatering") with THE OTHER GRUNGIES. They are openly mocking the whole Talent Show thing, although they really want to perform themselves. It will be clear that THE GRUNGIES really hate THE TIFFANYS. They will solicit ideas for a really, really good revenge for them.

Besides trying to get on TROY'S radar, EMILY admits that she doesn't really want to be the "leader" of THE REGS, although she likes them. She just thinks she should be noticed as an individual. She solicits opinions/ advice from the audience, but invariably one or another of the REGS drags her away. TARAS and BULBA, in particular, are always joining EMILY'S conversations. But their English is not that good and they usually misunderstand what's being said.

TOM'S nametag says "Tom Crews" but he's crossed out the "Tom" and written in "Thomas." He warns people not to make any jokes about Nicole Kidman or Katie Holmes or Oprah or Scientology and he's not afraid to pop anyone that does. He claims to have a black belt, but unfortunately his "moves" are pretty funny. He'll get very aggressive over imagined slights and will yell at the slightest provocation - everything is a perceived insult. Luckily, TARAS and BULBA will manage to hold him back when he tries to start a fight.

MADISON is trailing THE TIFFANYS and trying to insinuate herself with them, reminding them how much fun they used to have. It doesn't work - the TIFFANYS think that she's "really nice, but not quite jello" and "they don't mean to scrap her but she's just not a Tiffany." She commiserates with audience members and asks if anyone knows how much it costs to get your name changed. Her speech is sprinkled with Tiff-speak. She'll hang out with EMILY because at least she wears decent "garbs."

EDITH and MARTHA are circulating together along with THE OTHER LUNCH LADIES. All but MARTHA are very excited about being included in the Talent Show and for once showing off talents not seen in the cafeteria. EDITH, in particular, is dying to sing. MARTHA is complaining about anything and everything and berates EDITH for even thinking that they'll win anything other than the "Sloppy Joe Award." (The OTHER LUNCH LADIES are excited that there might even BE an award like that.) MARTHA is never without her can of Coke. THE LUNCH LADIES are taking orders for THE LUNCH LADY GOURMET COOKBOOK with all proceeds going to replenish their hairnet supply. When they spot THE MAINTENANCE GUYS there will be a standoff with both sides lining up and yelling slurs. "Cellar Dwellers!" "Kitchen Hags!" "You smell like Pine-Sol!" "Put it in the chili mac!"

GUNTHER is at the forefront of the OTHER MAINTENANCE GUYS, backed by DANA. She parrots everything GUNTHER says, to the point where he gets annoyed. He's checking that people have wiped their feet and picks up imaginary trash and loudly asks who dropped it, threatening to take them downstairs and introduce them to "Mr. Mop." DANA offers to duct tape the offenders to the wall. Dana will be helpful with audience members who (she perceives) have things ready to break (glasses, purse strap, etc. a button missing, etc.). She'll duct tape it together for them. The OTHER MAINTENANCE guys stick very closely together, moving and walking as one and leaning against the wall together, etc. All (except GUNTHER) rattle their keys.

There can be many other confrontations between groups that are not described here. As you rehearse and begin to develop the characters, you will discover different interactions and relationships and should feel free to include them.

PART TWO - THE PLAY

The audience moves to the playing area. During the opening, there's a lot of heckling. Most of these will involve the heckler standing up, yelling their line and sitting down. Hecklers should snap their lines, ad-lib, overlap, etc.

SHERYL and MARK enter. All the other characters are with their groups, mixed in with the audience.

SHERYL: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen, and welcome to the All-School Talent Show!

MARK: Unlike most school talent shows, our competition will include members of the faculty and staff as well as students.

LUNCH LADIES: Yeah!!! Go Lunch Ladies!

TANK: Hey, doncha have some tuna fish to ruin?

MARTHA: Hey, Gunther, a guy named John called. He's waiting for you to come clean. (LUNCH LADIES hoot with laughter.)

SHERYL: Please! We want to have fun, but no rowdiness. Before we get started, there have been some changes in the program. (She refers to message slips.) Mr. Shadley in the English Department is with his wife, awaiting the birth of triplets!

MARK: (Checking another message slip.) Miss Conger from Biology had a small accident on bus duty - got a little too close when the door closed. She has to get cast put on her nose.

SHERYL: (Checking messages.) Coach Porter had tickets to. . . . What? A Barry Manilow concert? Really?

MARK: That's a shame. His Shakespearean sonnet is splendid. (Theatrically) "When in disgrace with fortune and men's eyes, I all alone bewep my outcast state. . ." TOM: Yeah, we "be weeping" he ain't here either!

MARK: Tom Crews, you sit down and be quiet!

TOM: (yelling) THOMAS, it's THOMAS. And my last name is spelled different! THOMAS, d'ya hear me?
THOMAS! (He attempts to storm the stage but is held back by TARAS and BULBA.)

MARK: Oh, I see Principal Chowder is going to be late. (All characters in audience laugh and hoot.)

SHERYL: Yes, yes, I know. He's always late. But when he gets here he's going to (pausing and checking program) . . .er, mime. (To MARK) Mime? (She mimes walking against the wind.)

MARK: Yes. Mime. Principal Chowder put himself through college on a Mime Scholarship. He'll be late because his poodle was kicked out of "Mutt Camp."

BADGER: Hey, Tiffany, maybe you could get a scholarship there!

TIFFANY TWO: Prune it, Badger! Why don't you purch some decent garbs, grunge-bark?

SHERYL: That's enough, Tiffany.

MARK: We did get a last minute replacement - Eyeball Diebel (pronounced so they rhyme). .. I mean, Janis Diebel and her (checking program) Grungies will be performing in place of our chemistry teacher, Dr. Frampton, who was going to do a plate-twirling routine. What happened to him?

SHERYL: Dr. Frampton had a cat emergency. He was trying out his latest experiment - Formula X - on his cat, Puffer. Evidently, Puffer is now totally paralyzed. Dr. Frampton is working on an antidote and if he can find one in time, he'll be here.

MARK: Between you and me - Frampton's Bunsen Burner isn't quite lit. So, let's get started! Come on up, Grungies!

They do. They will be heckled by the others, particularly THE TIFFANYS.

MARK: The Grungies will be performing. . .(Checking program) that can't be right.

SHERYL: (shrugging) That's what they told me.

MARK: Okaaaay. The Grungies will be performing the classic children's song, "Froggy Went A-Courting."

Hoots of derision from the TIFFANYS and JOCKS. JANIS and THE GRUNGIES ad-lib insults back at them until stopped by MARK.

MARK: You know, Eyeba. . ., Janis, you really should try to get along with the other kids. You bring some of this on yourself.

TATTOO: Oh, great, this again.

BADGER: (mocking) Why don't you dress like the other kids? Why don't you act like the other kids? Why don't you join clubs?

JANIS: We don't want to be the same as all of THEM.

TATTOO: We LIKE being different.

SHERYL: But there are some very nice kids here at school. . .

BADGER: (mocking) Oh, yeah, we get all kinds of advice on fitting in. "Why do you have all those tattoos?" "Why do you put staples in your upper lip?" "Why do you let the air out of the teachers' tires?" TATTOO: Shaddup, Badger.

JANIS: We are individuals! They're cookie-cutter people!

MARK: What did she just say about teacher's tires?

BADGER: (mocking) "Why do you chew tobacco?" "Why do you dye your hair?" "Why do you pick your nose?"

TATTOO: Yeah, "Why do you. . ." (stops as she realizes what BADGER said. To BADGER) Wait a minute - you pick your nose?

SHERYL: What I don't understand is why you seem to take perfectly good clothes and then cut them up. And you wear new ones all the time. It must get expensive. . .(TATTOO interrupts)

TATTOO: (To audience) I don't pick my nose. (Gesturing to BADGER) Maybe she does, but. . .

JANIS: We wear our clothes inside out to show that we won't conform. And we cut them to show our contempt for corporate culture.

TATTOO: (To audience) I have NEVER picked my nose.

MARK: Okaaaay. With that, I think we should move on to your, ahem, talent.

SHERYL: I think you're right. Let's hear it for "Eyeball and The Grungies" and their version of "Froggy Went A-Court in'."

GRUNGIES' SONG

("Froggy-Went-A-Courtin'" - American Folk Song)

All us Grungies were born like you, uh-huh, uh-huh

All us Grungies were born like you, then looked in the mirror and said "we're through", uh-huh, uh-huh

At five we decided to cut our hair, uh-huh, uh-huh

At five we decided to cut our hair, used nail clippers, made Mommy swear, uh-huh, uh-huh

At ten we decided to mismatch clothes, uh-huh, uh-huh

At ten we decided to mismatch clothes, and wore our mittens on our toes, uh-huh, uh-huh

Thirteen would bring the first tattoo, uh-huh, uh-huh

Thirteen would bring the first tattoo, lots since then and we're still not through, uh-huh, uh-huh

The piercings made us all unique, uh-huh, uh-huh

The piercings made us all unique, can blow our nose right out our cheek, uh-huh, uh-huh

So that's the story of where we are, uh-huh, uh-huh

That's the story of where we are and how we got to be bizarre, uh-huh, uh-huh

Come join the Grungies if you're a freak, uh-huh, uh-huh

A freak, a geek and you're maladjust, and ya wanna be different, just like us, uh-huh, uh-huh

When it is finished, the GRUNGIES bow and exit.

MARK: Very nice - not quite Shakespeare, but very good. Who's next, Sheryl?

SHERYL: Next up is Tiffany Cummins and The Tiffanys. . .

The TIFFANYS come onstage to much cheering from TROY until the other JOCKS pull him back into his seat.

SHERYL: (checking the program) I see that you are doing that old American favorite, "Give My Regards To Broadway."

TIFFANY ONE: Well, not 'zactly, P.B. The Tiffs and me were riffin', and I cogged that maybe it was too crustoid.

SHERYL: Riffin? Cogged? Crustoid?

TIFFANY ONE: Ohferpete. We were TALKING and I THOUGHT it was too OLD.

OTHER TIFFANYS: Oh, 'slutely, 'slutely.

SHERYL: So, you're not going to do it now?

TIFFANY ONE: Oh, we're still vokin' the song, but we kinda changed it, ya cog?

SHERYL turns and gestures a "what the heck?" to MARK.

MARK: (explaining) They're still vokin' - singing - the song - but they kinda changed it. Ya cog ? (Taps his head?)

TIFFANY THREE: Oooh, C-Dub, you're naff! You understand Tif-speak! Hey, you could almost hang with us.

TIFFANY ONE: OhferPete, Tiff. No, he could not. Is he a girl? Is his first name Tiffany? I mean, WUH?

OTHER TIFFANYS: Yeah, WUH? OhferPete.

TIFFANY THREE: Sorry. My splat.

TIFFANY ONE: Zokay, Tiff. (To SHERYL.) See, to tater with the Tiffs. . .

MARK will translate as the TIFFANYS explain.

MARK: To hang with the Tiffs

TIFFANY ONE: . . . like goin' to the mall to sponze for garbs MARK:

Like going to the mall to shop for clothes.

TIFFANY ONE: . . . you have to 'slutely be a real Tiffany.

MARK: You have to absolutely be a real Tiffany. For sure.

SHERYL: I get it. Do your parents talk like this, Tiffany?

All the TIFFANYS start to answer, until SHERYL indicates TIFFANY ONE.

TIFFANY ONE: 'Course not. (Thoughtful). It's prob because I'm adopted, y'cog? I was left on the doorstep of my nurts when I was just a froshie.

TIFFANY TWO: Nurts are parents, 'cause they nurture. Froshie is a baby. Cog it? (SHERYL nods.)

TIFFANY ONE: The only clue was a note, pinned to my blankie. It riffed, "Her name is Tiffany, like the Breakfast." It's was like b-fide miracle.

MARK: Do you ever wonder about your real mother?

TIFFANY ONE: Naw. 'Cause my 'dopted nurts are totally narf and jello. And they're rolling in ginger - my Popperoni is a dermatologist. Which is good, because I really need my own waffle.

SHERYL: (completely lost) Okay, help me out here.

TIFFANY THREE: Ohferpete. Her nurts -parents- are rich - rolling in ginger. A waffle is a credit card.

TIFFANY ONE: So that's why bein' a Tiffany is so spec. (To MARK) And why you can't be one. But don't feel splat, C-Dub. It's not your fault.

SHERYL:(Ironically) Yes, C-Dub, don't feel splat.

MARK: OhferPete. Come on, girls, go ahead and "voke" your song. I'm sure it will be great. I mean "jello."

TIFFANY ONE: Oh, it's the jello-ist and totally naff. We've been 'hearsin' since like Jan.

GIVE OUR REGARDS TO TIFFANY

("Give My Regards To Broadway" - George M. Cohan)

Music intro

VERSE: There are always girls in high school who don't know how to fit in.

We have never had that problem so they ask how we begin.

We tell them that the first thing is to have a jello name.
If you don't, you'll fall flat, and be labeled a splat. That's when we proclaim

CHORUS: Too bad you can't be Tiff-nee
Sorry, but we must have rules
You can be nice and al-most popular
But we will not be fooled

It isn't just garbs and haircuts
It's something in your chromosome
'Cause if your first name's not Tif-fa-nee We
say you might as well stay home.

Music interlude. Repeat Chorus

Following bows and applause, including TROY going wild, the TIFFANYS return to their seats.

SHERYL: Well that was. . .

MARK: Jello. Definitely jello. And next up is. . .

SHERYL: Troy McManus and The Jocks. Come on up, guys.

They come onstage.

TROY: Hi there, hyperventilated teachers!

MARK: What?

TROY: Oh, I like ta call you that cause you've each got two last names with that hypervent thingy in between 'em.

SHERYL: It's called a hyphen, Troy.

TROY: It is? I thought a hyphen was like some kinda animal or somethin'. Geez, do I feel dumb.

MARK: That reminds me, Troy. I thought you were kicked off the team because of your grades.

DINK: It was close, but then he aced Frampton's chemistry exam.

SHERYL and MARK: He what!!!

TROY: Yeah, I mean, I had some help, but I like - whatcha callit? Oh, yeah. Studied.

MARK: Well, what do you know? You might try that "studying thing" in some or our classes too, you know.

SHERYL: Well, congratulations, Troy. So, what are you guys going to be doing this evening? The program says TBA.

TROY: Yeah, I was wonderin' 'bout that. Is that like YMCA? Cuz we didn't practice that. I don't like songs with spelling in 'em.

DINK: Uh, Troy. That means "To Be Announced."

TROY: Oh, okay. I was worried. Well, the song we practiced was this dumb old thing written by two dead guys from New England. Gilligan and Starbucks - somethin' like that.

TONY: Gilbert and Sullivan, Troy. And they were from England - the real England - not New England.

TROY: Oh, the OLD England. So, anyway, Tony and Dink changed the words so it's not so dumb now.

SHERYL: Gilbert and Sullivan! Wonderful! I love Gilbert and Sullivan! What show is it from? (TONY and DINK stand behind TROY, frantically waving their hands at SHERYL.) Is it Pirates, or Pinafore or . . .

TROY: (realizing what she's saying) Whoa, whoa, whoa. Wait a minute here. Dink, you didn't say nuthin' bout it being from some SHOW. I don't do showtunes, man, I told you that. Especially no show called "Pinafore." My parents had one of those at my birthday party and I finally had to take off the blindfold to whack it and make the candy fall. . .(he acts out swinging at a pinata as he says this). . .

DINK: Uh, Troy, that's not a pinafore, that's a pinata.

TROY: Oh, okay, then.

MARK: A pinafore is like a jumper. (Gesturing to what SHERYL is wearing. Again, TANK and TROY are trying to stop him.)

TROY: THAT'S a pinafore? You got me doin' a song from a SHOW about a DRESS? I am so outta here. I got a reputation you know.

MARK: (Backtracking madly) Um, no, no. . . not a jumper dress a. . .jumper.

SHERYL: (Improvising) Yes. . .um, a jumper. (She jumps).

DINK: (Joining in on the deception) Yeah, buddy, a pinafore is what they. . .um, um. . .it's what they call "jump balls" in Old England.

TONY: (chiming in) Yeah, yeah. A "jumper" is just a "jump ball." In England. The Old England. The uh, uh, uh. . . OEBA. Yeah, the OEBA. . .you know, the Old English Basketball Association.

TROY: OHHHHH, I get it. . .So, like to start the game in Old England, they do a pinafore? (DINK and TONY nod.) And they would say, "That LeBron James is jolly good at pinafores?"

TONY: Right. But anyway, C-Dub, the song isn't from "Pinafore," it's from "The Mikado."

TROY: It's NOT? Shoot. Just when I was getting into it. I thought we could add some pinafores to the dancing - the whudyoucallit, calligraphy.

SHERYL: Ladies and gentlemen - The Jocks.

THREE LITTLE JOCKS FROM SCHOOL
(“Three Little Maids” from “The Mikado” by Gilbert and Sullivan)

Music intro
Three little jocks from school are us
Never would cheat and never cuss

Strong and tough as a Greyhound bus
Three little jocks from school
Need to be healthy, strong and fit

(music repeat of last line)

Even when on the bench we sit

(music repeat of last line)

Best of all we're allowed to spit.

(music repeat of last line at end punctuate with fake spit.)

Three little jocks from school.

Music interlude

Three little jocks, with crowds admiring

Thrilling the fans with wins inspiring

We do it all plus much perspiring

Three little jocks from school

Three little jo--cks from school

Music interlude

When we're behind it isn't doom

We'll pull it out no need for gloom

With one whiff of our locker room

Three little jocks from school.

(music repeat of last line)

One little jock and the crowd will roar

Two little jocks and watch us score (Troy)

Then I arrive with my pinafore!

Three little jocks from school

(music repeat of last line)

Three little jocks, with crowds admiring

Thrilling the fans with wins inspiring

We do it all plus much perspiring

Three little jocks from school

Three little jo--cks from school

When done, they bow and return to their seat during the applause.

SHERYL: Terrific. Thank you, Jocks. Next up is a group called "The Regs" - whatever that means.

The REGS jump up and start to the stage, with EMILY reluctantly following.

TARAS: Iss us! Ve are da regs! Come on, guys!

TOM: Let's kick some talent behind!

MADISON: We'll be the jello-est!

They ad-lib until they arrive onstage

MARK: So what are "regs"?

BULBA: We iss regular kids.

TARAS: Not really rotten-stinko kids, not really brainies, not really stupids, not really poopular. (Proudly) Ve not really anythink.

SHERYL: So, is there a leader of "The Regs"?

OTHER REGS: Oh, Emily, definitely.

MADISON: 'Slutely. (They push EMILY to the forefront.)

EMILY: Okay, OKAY. Look, I don't see myself as part of any group, but I guess if anything, yeah, (sigh) I'm a Reg.

TARAS: This iss correct. You not poopular like dem Tiffy-chicks, but you not all vierdo-nutsie like dem grungepeoples.

BULBA: And you do not make mit der sports, like dem jockey shorts.

TOM: And you aren't a brainiac, but you're not dumb as a box of rocks.

EMILY: Gee, thanks, for the vote of confidence, guys.

TARAS and BULBA: You velcome.

TOM: See, the thing 'bout being a reg is there aren't any stupid rules about who can be one. Ya don't hafta really DO anything, like have a certain name, or invent your own speech, right, Madison?

MADISON: Oh, 'slutely.

MARK: But wait a minute. Emily, you are the school's number one computer whiz. Doesn't that make you a geek instead of a Reg?

EMILY: I guess I'm both. Or something.

BULBA: In our homeland, everybody is geeks and makes vit da mouse.

SHERYL: What IS your homeland, anyway?

TARAS: Iss very tiny. Iss waaaaay over dat (points in any direction) vay far away. . . somewhere. I don't think you heard of.

BULBA: Yes. Far away. (sigh) I miss sometimes, do you, Taras?

TARAS: Yah. Ven it is Platski season, I tink of sitting vit my homies, vatchink da game.

BULBA: Ach, yess, hanging vit my peeps and downing some Mushka.

TARAS: Ah, yes. I miss da Mushka.

MARK: Yes, well, I'm sure you do miss that. But, um, what are you doing for us this evening?

MADISON: We're vokin' some opera.

TOM: Yeah, it's about Donna somebody but Emily re-wrote it the words.

EMILY: It's "La Donna e Mobile" by Giuseppe Verdi. From the opera, "Rigoletto."

SHERYL: Right. Ladies and gentlemen, the Regs.

LA REGS

("La Donne E Mobile" from "Rigoletto" by Giuseppe Verdi)

Don't make the honor roll
But don't sit detention
We don't stand out a lot
Like some we could mention (gesturing to TIFFANYS. Song begins again.)

Don't make the honor roll
But don't sit detention
We don't stand out a lot
Don't need attention.

Don't play on varsity
We're not contenders
We're safely in the stands
Our bones are tender.

Never been in trouble
Never been suspended
Never us, 'cause we've
Just ne-e-e-ver been caught Ne-e-
e-ver been caught. Weeeeeeee've
never been caught Music
interlude, for dance.

No Merit Scholarship
We're not historians You
won't see us onstage As
valedictorians.

Though we're not popular
We're not detested
And our development
Isn't arrested

We like being av'rage
We like ordinary
Never stars, but Be-e-
e-tter than weird.
Be-e-e-tter than weird.
Beeeeeetter than weird.

They bow to applause and start to leave the stage.

MARK: Well, that was . . . average (The Regs stop short, turn, and give him a "look") hahahaha. Just kidding, just kidding.

SHERYL: Next, we have Gunther Erickson and The Maintenance Guys. Come on up here, gentlemen. (They do with heckling from the LUNCH LADIES..)

MARK: As we mentioned before, this IS an all-school Talent Show, so we're especially happy to have our invaluable janitors and clean-up crew. . .

TANK: S'cuse me, C-Dub, but there's a lot more to us than cleaning.

DANA: One word - KEYS! (She rattles hers.) Two words - duct tape. Three words - don't mess with us.

SHERYL: Actually, that's four words, dear.

DANA: You the math teacher now? Sheesh.

TANK: You teachers got a bad attitude towards us, y'know?

SHERYL: Oh, I didn't mean anything by it! Really.

MARK: No, no - we certainly didn't mean to put you down. We ALL know that if it weren't for you, the place would fall apart.

SHERYL: Oh, my, yes! You are the backbone of the school, you're the ones that keep it running. I often tell my students that if it weren't for the professional custodial . . .er. . .engineers, we'd all be in trouble. Big trouble.

DANA: Hear that, Gun, (pronounced "goon") they're running scared. We have the POWER, man! (All the MAINTENANCE GUYS rattle their keys in unison.)

GUNTHER: I know, Dana. But we must only use it for good.

TANK: (Aside to MAINTENANCE GUYS) Still, it's kinda fun to mess with them. Watch this. (Struts over to SHERYL and addresses her) Soooo, P. B., anything you need fixed in your room? (The MAINTENANCE GUYS snicker loudly.)

SHERYL: (Stunned and a little afraid.) Me? No! No! Nothing. Everything is fine. Perfect.

DANA: Are you absolutely sure? Hmmm? (She rattles her keys again.) SHERYL:

Yes, I'm sure. (Thinks a minute and then. . .) I mean. Well, there is

that one window shade that won't go up. Or down. Just kinda hangs there crooked. I put in a requisition last month a nd. . .

MAINTENANCE GUYS ad-lib, mockingly "Ooooh, a requisition." DANA:

(sarcastically) Gee, last month was realllly busy for us.

GUNTHER: Yeah, but it's slow right now. You guys think we can get to this serious window shade crisis soon?

TANK: I dunno. Doc Frampton makes an awful mess in that lab of his.

SHERYL: (Eager to help. Very much "sucking up.") I could talk to him! I could ask him to be more careful and make sure the students clean up before they leave and. . .

GUNTHER: Gee, would you do that, P.B.?

SHERYL: I'd be happy too. Really. (Looks at all of them.) Really.

DANA: Hey, Gun, are you thinkin' what I'm thinkin'?

GUNTHER: Yeah. I'm thinkin' maybe. . .MAYBE. . . we can squeeze in a window shade repair real soon. Like maybe next week.

SHERYL: Oh, could you? (Profoundly grateful) Thankyouthankyouthankyou.

MARK: Ohferpete. So what are you doing for us this evening, guys?

TANK: We're doin' a song from "The Bad News Bears." I mean, it didn't have words, so we made some up.

SHERYL: Oh, really? You know. . . I don't remember a song in that movie. Except the music from "Carmen," the opera, of course. If that's it, well, it's not really a song from "Bad News Bears" it's from "Carmeee. . ."(She trails off as the MAINTENANCE GUYS rattle their keys.)

DANA: Gee, Gun, maybe we won't be able to get to that window shade after all.

SHERYL: (hurriedly) Ladies and gentlemen, the Maintenance Guys doing a song from "The Bad News Bears!"

THE MAINTENANCE GUYS TANGO
(“Habanero” from “Carmen” by George Bizet)

No, we don't teach, we smell like bleach
But when it's broke, we jump-in-to the breach

We grab our brush, without a blush
We don't ask why it-is-that-you can't flush

We do the task, our feelings masked
Is asking for-your-love, too much to ask

We do the task, our feelings masked
Is asking forrrrrrr your love too much to ask

A single rose, could use some clothes Any-
thing that will not de-com-pose

We take the trash, with no big splash
Oh, and by-the-way we will take cash.

So fi-na-lly, we hope you see
That there is more to us than guys with keys.

So fi-na-lly, we hope you see
That there is more to us than guyssss - with keys.

As they are taking their bows, the LUNCH LADIES start snapping their fingers in unison and walk on stage. They are led by EDITH and MARTHA - who is still clutching her Coke. The LUNCH LADIES face off with the MAINTENANCE GUYS, who join in on the finger snapping. The two groups circle each other warily until they arrive at the others' position. Then, the finger snapping stops abruptly and all stand with arms and hands at the ready (think of a "quick draw" stance). At exactly the same time, the LUNCH LADIES whip out spatulas from their belts as the MAINTENANCE GUYS whip out small plungers from theirs. They advance on each other and mingle until they're paired up, facing each other, with EDITH facing GUNTHER in the front. Slowly, each group puts their "weapons" back into their belts. Then, suddenly, the LUNCH LADIES grab the keys of their MAINTENANCE GUY "partner", pull them out on the reel and, at the same time, let them go. (EDITH, because GUNTHER doesn't have keys, can only pull on the empty key ring.) The MAINTENANCE GUYS run away, with cries of "ouch, ouch, ouch." The LUNCH LADIES catcall after them.

MARTHA: If ya can't stand the heat.

ALL LUNCH LADIES: Stay outta the kitchen!

SHERYL and MARK hurry out to defuse the situation.

MARK: Okay, okay, Jets and Sharks. No rumbles today.

MARTHA: Lunch Ladies rule!

BETTY: Maintenance Guys are wimps!

WILMA: We got a right to protect the kitchen!

SHERYL: Would you stop! Why can't you all just get along?

BETTY: They think they're so tough because they've got all those keys.

WILMA: Yeah, without their keys, they're nuthin'!

ALL LUNCH LADIES except EDITH chant: Nuthin' without keys! Nuthin without keys! Nuthin' without keys!

MARK: Alright, alright. (To SHERYL) Although, they do have a point. Those guys are nuts when it comes to their keys.

SHERYL: Yes, but this rivalry is ridiculous. Edith, you're a reasonable person. Do you think maybe you could do something?

EDITH: Well, I was thinking that maybe we could have a peace conference. Like a summit. On neutral territory, like. . .well, maybe the library.

The LIBRARIAN stands and screams "Nooooo" before "fainting" back into her seat.

MARK: Never mind, never mind. It was just an idea. (To SHERYL, as together they cross off something on the program): Scratch the librarian number. So, Edith, maybe not the library.

EDITH: Well, in the furnace room then. Y'know - their turf. I don't think that Gunther is such a bad boy. . .

BETTY: What? A boy like that, he'd kill your brother.

WILMA: Forget that boy and find another.

MARTHA: One of your own kind, stick to your own kind.

EDITH: I guess you're right.

SHERYL: So, what act will the Lunch Ladies be doing tonight, Edith?

EDITH: Well, we're all big fans of the American tradition of labor songs, which is why we chose to perform "Sixteen Tons." But we're also very dedicated in our quest to serve the very best in cafeteria cuisine. So our talent act this evening will be a combination of those two things.

MARK: Sounds. . .intriguing. Are you ready?

MARTHA: (finishing off her Coke, crushing the can, and handing it to SHERYL.) Yeah. Here. This here's a dead

puppy.

SHERYL: Oh, okay. Ladies and gentlemen, the Lunch Ladies.

SIXTEEN QUARTS

("Sixteen Tons" - American Folk Song)

VERSE

(Sooooome) kids will skip lunch when they don't like the fare
For all those kids we've a secret to share
Burgs become chili the next day and then
The day after that, you'll see it again

CHORUS

(You take) your sixteen quarts tomato puree
A cuppa chopped onions
10 pounds of ziti
Cook it for 6 hours and serve it with fries
That's what they call Lunch Lady Surprise

VERSE

(Nooooow), the students who pass on weenies and beans
Will soon figure out what's with our cuisine
Eat them weenies or you'll pay the price
Cuz next day they'll be served on rice

REPEAT CHORUS

VERSE

(Yooooou) kids see us cookin' better dive right in
If lunch is familiar, y'know where it's been
To all of you kids, this lesson to learn
Eat it now or it's sure to return

REPEAT CHORUS

They finish, bow, to applause and start to leave. SHERYL stops MARTHA and EDITH.

SHERYL: Thank you, Lunch Ladies. All of you can return to your seats, except Martha and Edith. And I'd like the other leaders of each group to come forward. Tiffany Cummins, Eyeball, Emily, Troy, Gunther. . .

MARTHA: Hey, I need another Coke! (Nobody responds immediately. She says this as the others are coming on stage, ad-libbing.) A Coke, I need a Coke. (Now she gets LOUD.) A COKE. ANY BODY HEAR ME? I WANNA COKE!

MARK: Oh, please, someone! Give Martha a Coke!

The LIBRARIAN gives the Coke to MARTHA, who visibly and audibly pops the top and takes a swig.

MARK: Happy? Alright, now. To make things absolutely fair, I want all of you to go offstage (or out of the room) while we vote. That will prevent any undue influence that you may have. We'll call you back in a minute.

They exit. Besides SHERYL and MARK, the following lines are given by characters in the audience ala the heckling from the opening scene.)

SHERYL: It's time to vote! But before we do, tell the winners what they will get, C-Dub.

MARK: (consulting a list) We have some wonderful donated prizes. The winners will receive a free lunch in the cafeteria, courtesy of the Lunch Ladies who are also donating copies of their cookbook - Cafeteria Cuisine. (LUNCH LADIES stand and cheer.) The GAP has donated a gift certificate for an imported sequined strap belt with metal buckle, valued at \$30.

ALL THE TIFFANYS: (in unison) Ooooh.

MARK: Coach Porter has secured a set of towels from the Lebron James Collection.

DINK: Wow! Sure hope they haven't been washed!

MARK: The Tattoo and Piercing Hut has donated one piercing, on your choice of body part.

TATTOO: What if you've run out of places?

SHERYL: I'm guessing you could give it to a poor un-pierced friend.

MARK: Tiffany's dad, Dr. Cummins, invites the winners to come to his clinic for free unwanted hair removal.

TIFFANY TWO: Tiff's Dad is totally naff and a b-fide Pooh-Bear.

MARK: Windex is providing a case of its new Mountain Berry Glass Cleaner for a streak-free shine.

TANK: Hey, and, it's a GREAT aftershave.

MARK: Dr. Frampton is donating posters of the Periodic Table of the Elements, suitable for framing, and tubes of his original hand cream made with essence of lily, olives, and (peering closely at list). . . guano?

SHERYL: I hope that's a typo.

MARK: So do I. The Ice Cream Freezer downtown is giving the winning team a lifetime supply of vanilla ice cream.

TARAS and BULBA stand and high five each other.

TARAS: I LUF vanilla!

BULBA: YESSSS! Is fave!

MARK: And, finally, I am personally donating tickets to the upcoming movie version of "King Lear," starring Tom Cruise.

TOM (yelling): It's not me, okay?

SHERYL: The moment is here. It's time to vote. Raise your hands if you. . .

She gets no further as EDITH bursts back on stage.

MARK: I thought we asked you to. . . What's wrong, Edith?

EDITH: It's my twin, Martha! Something, something. . .

JANIS:(Interrupting as she enters.) Oh, this is soo freaky!

SHERYL: Would you please . . .(TIFFANY ONE rushes in with TROY.)

TIFFANY ONE: (breathlessly) Martha is non-negot, 'slutely, in-op. 100% non-funct. She's like static, non-mobile, vacant.

SHERYL: Someone please translate!

TROY: She's like a Popsicle! Only not cold.

EDITH: We were all milling around and arguing. And all of a sudden, Martha went stiff as a board and fell over.

TIFFANY ONE: 'Slutely rigid!

SHERYL: Be quiet, Tiffany!

TIFFANY ONE: You can't prune me, P.B. I tend what I tend!

TROY: I tended it too!

EDITH: She's still breathing, but there's something terribly wrong with her. Oh, dear, oh, dear.

JANIS: It happened right after she took a swig of Coke.

SHERYL: Oh my gosh! Where is she now?

GUNTHER enters with MARTHA strapped to an appliance dolly. She is staring, non-blinking. After the audience sees her, GUNTHER wheels her around so she is facing upstage and her face cannot be seen by the audience. He is followed by EMILY who is holding the Coke can at arms length. The entire group looks at her. MARK goes upstage and waves his hand in front of MARTHA'S face.

MARK: Not even a blink. (SHERYL claps her hands right next to MARTHA'S ear.)

SHERYL: Nothing. What do we do now?

MARK: Call the cops? Or the paramedics?

EDITH: (crying)I hate to do that! The school's had enough bad publicity lately.

SHERYL: But, still. . .

EMILY: Oh my gosh! It's Formula X!

TROY: Isn't that like a car?

EMILY: No, Troy. It's Dr. Frampton's latest experiment.

MARK: The one he used on the cat?

EMILY: Yes. You guys all know how Dr. Frampton keeps experimenting and making up these formulas?

JANIS: He's killed more mice than Felix the Cat.

GUNTHER: Yeah, and guess who has to get rid of 'em late at night.

EMILY: Well, he told us all about Formula X. He said it would paralyze anyone who got even a tiny, tiny dose. I think he wanted to sell it to the Army or something.

SHERYL: Troy, you're the new chemistry star. What do you know about this Formula X?

TROY: (TROY looks behind himself, not realizing she's talking about him.) What? You talkin' to me?

EMILY: Dr. Frampton said he had some bugs to work out. The stuff worked, but well, he said it worked too well. Instead of being temporary, every time he tried it on mice it was. . .permanent.

EDITH: Oh, no! My poor, poor Martha!

SHERYL: But how did Martha. . .(She realizes what happened.) Omigosh, the Coke!

MARK: Someone slipped Formula X into her Coke! Let's see. . .we saw her get it from (insert LIBRARIAN'S name, points to him/her) and then Martha opened it, took a drink. And then you all went off stage.

TIFFANY ONE: Don't tend at me, C-Dub!

GUNTHER: Hey, I just clean up 'round here.

JANIS: I suppose I'll get blamed for this, too. Figures.

TROY: This is why I don't drink Coke. Sierra Mist, now that's good stuff.

EMILY: We were all out there with her. She kept putting the can down while we were arguing and then she'd yell at someone to pass it to her and it was all very confusing. Any one of us COULD have done it.

MARK: Not anyone, Emily. It had to be someone who could get the Formula from the chem lab! Which wouldn't have been easy.

SHERYL: I'm calling Frampton and see how that antidote is coming along. (She whips out her cell phone and "makes" the call.)

WILMA: (from the audience) Yoo-hoo! C-Dub! You want to see Martha's handbag?

MARK: Yes, yes, bring it here! (WILMA hands it to them and sits down. All gather around to see what's in it. They all gasp.)

SHERYL: (closing phone) Frampton says he hasn't quite got the antidote yet. Said he'll send it over if he can get the cat moving again. Idiot.

MARK: Take a look at this, Sheryl.

SHERYL joins them. She reacts and then starts pulling out roll after roll of rubber-banded money which gets passed around so all are holding handfuls.

SHERYL: Whoo-ee. Where'd she get all that money? And, wait. . .there's something else. . .oh, it's last week's school newspaper.

MARK: Or, rather, it looks like the corner of last week's school newspaper.

SHERYL: She wrote something at the top. "Some people pay to keep their secrets!" What in the heck does that mean?

MARK: Could she have been blackmailing someone?

ALL: BLACKMAIL?

MARK: Yes, it's obvious. Blackmail. What else could that mean?

SHERYL: (Bringing him downstage, away from the others) Mark, not many people know this - but, well, I used to work at a private detective agency in the summers while I was in college.

MARK: You did? Wow!

SHERYL: Well, mostly I made copies, but still. . .Do you think I should take over here, maybe get things organized? I mean, we could ask these people (the audience) for help. They're smart. (pause as they look at each other) Well, some of them, anyway. Why don't we let them help!

MARK: And they can question the suspects!

At this point, SHERYL gives instructions for the next part. These instructions will be determined by the way you are distributing the physical evidence (the school newspaper) and the way the audience will submit their solution. See Part Three.

PART THREE - THE CLUES & INTERROGATION

THE PHYSICAL EVIDENCE - THE SCHOOL NEWSPAPER

In this part of the event, the audience will get the school newspaper, interrogate the suspects, and submit their solutions. The ways you can do this are covered in the Production Packet. You can just give them the newspaper. OR you can send them on a Clue Hunt which takes them all over the facility. You can ask for complete solutions. OR you can give them ballots to vote for the guilty party.

The Production Packet is sent electronically and will include:

- our Clue Hunt with answer key, flow chart, solution sheet and instructions for designing your own Clue Hunt.
- a page of ballots, suitable for photocopying.
- SHERYL'S instructions to the audience, depending on the method you use.
- In the center of the script you will see our version of the school newspaper. The Packet will include it along with hints for creating your own. You will need a software program that can create bordered text boxes. (We use Microsoft Publisher, but most common word processing programs can make these.)

You will also need to create the baby photo of TIFFANY ONE, using a graphics program - we did this in Publisher as well.

THE INTERROGATION

The cast circulates in their groups during this time. Each will do their best not to lie, but of course some people do have something to hide! For the first part of the clue hunt, the audience will be mostly pre-occupied with finding the newspaper. Once they have it, the real questioning will begin!

THE TIFFANYS don't know anything about a love note, but there's all kinds of girls who have crushes on TROY. EMILY follows him around like a puppy dog. Doesn't matter though, he belongs to TIFFANY ONE. They personally think that JANIS and the GRUNGIES are behind it all. They probably broke into the lab, looking for money to get tattoos or piercings or something.

Of course, they don't say it like that. Their version - "Don't cog anything about a mem left on Troy's 'chine. Lots of splat girls go taterin' after him. Emily, for 'zample, is always stubbin' after him. But ohferpete, it is so non-op and non-funct. He belongs to Tiffany. And 'slutely, they cog that the Grungies are behind it all. They are so NOT jello - it would be 'slutely like them to break into the lab lookin' for ginger so they could purch some garbs to cut up. They are so splat."

If questioned about the picture, TIFFANY ONE will say that of course that's not her. "I don't have crammed eyebrows, now do I?" The other TIFFANYS will back her completely, with a lot of 'slutelys' and 'ohferPetes.' All will deny being blackmailed by MARTHA.

THE GRUNGIES think that the cops really ought to take a look at the TIFFANYS. They say that the TIFFANYS don't have to answer to anyone and are above it all.. They probably shoplift at The Gap for kicks. Or TIFFANY ONE gets TROY to do it for her. JANIS denies being blackmailed by MARTHA about anything. If questioned about her GAP clothes she falters and then claims that she gets them secondhand. The GRUNGIES will back her up, claiming that she doesn't have to shoplift since people like the TIFFANYS only wear their clothes once and then give them away. JANIS also maintains that she didn't put anything into MARTHA's Coke - she had no reason to. If she was going to do something like that it wouldn't have been poor old MARTHA, it would have been someone that was rich or someone from the "establishment."

THE REGS agree that they're the only ones that are above suspicion - they're just too darn regular to do anything like shoplift or break into the chemistry lab or put things in people's Cokes. EMILY denies having a crush on TROY at first. But when TARAS and BULBA laugh uproariously at that, she is forced to admit that "yeah, she did k inda like him" but he didn't know she was alive. The REGS also agree that they avoided MARTHA. Edith was the nice twin and was always giving extra mac and cheese to her favorites, like TOM ("IT'S THOMAS!") CREWS. Heck, she was even really nice to TIFFANY ONE. Always gave her an extra brownie. TARAS and BULBA think that maybe MARTHA and GUNTHER had a "thing" going on and when MARTHA dumped him, he got mad and, using his keys, got the formula and then put it in MARTHA's coke. That's the way it would have been done in their country.

THE LUNCH LADIES are gathered around and supporting EDITH who is obviously distraught about her twin. She's just a poor widow trying to survive in the cafeteria. Both EDITH and MARTHA started to work in the cafeteria long before any of them, so they don't know the details - EDITH doesn't like to talk about the past. None are too fond of MARTHA, and out of earshot of EDITH they will say that if she doesn't recover, no one will really miss her. They think that blame should be laid squarely upon the MAINTENANCE GUYS. They're the ones with all the keys - like to the lab closet. They're the ones with the opportunity. And when EDITH feebly suggests that maybe GUNTHER isn't so bad, she is quickly quieted and reminded that they're all rotten to the core.

MAINTENANCE GUYS are thoroughly convinced that the LUNCH LADIES did it. Probably not EDITH, though. Even though they despise the LUNCH LADIES, they will admit that EDITH is sorta okay. But their theory is that the LUNCH LADIES were being blackmailed by MARTHA because she knew that the recipes in the cookbook were incomplete. No true cook gives out real recipes - they always alter them. MARTHA knew it and that's why they had to stop her.

If questioned about his keys, GUNTHER will quickly change the subject back to the LUNCH LADIES. The other MAINTENANCE GUYS will help out here and, instead of checking out whether GUNTHER really has his keys, will riff on the importance of the keys and how they never go anywhere without their keys. They even sleep and shower with them.

THE JOCKS are backing TROY, who is just plain clueless. He claims he didn't have nuthin' to do with hackin' into the chemistry computer. If he'd hacked anything it would be in pieces because he's really, really strong. He

admits that he really didn't study much for the chemistry exam, he thinks that it was a miracle. Or else it was because TIFFANY was sending him really good vibes. He never got a love note from that Eleanor or Emmy girl on his windshield and he would have noticed that because he probably would have hit something when he was driving. He's pretty sure that nobody put anything in MARTHA's Coke. She's just napping, he thinks, kinda like he does in class. He also thinks if someone dangled a Coke in front of her, she'd wake up pretty darn quick. THE JOCKS admit that even they don't know how he managed to pass the chemistry exam. But they've also noticed that TROY doesn't seem to have much cash lately. He's always hitting them up for loans.

MARK and SHERYL will be together. They really won't have much insight into the newspaper. SHERYL will tell how she doesn't know MARTHA well at all, although she did see her at the mall one Saturday. Matter of fact, she also saw JANIS at the mall on that very same day. Both say that they would be very surprised if EMILY had anything to do with it - she's a very nice girl and very helpful with anything computer-related. SHERYL also thinks that EMILY can do a lot better than TROY. Speaking of TROY, MARK says there is no way he passed a chemistry exam on his own. At tryouts last year for "Of Mice and Men" he told MARK he didn't want to play a mouse. SHERYL also notes that GUNTHER didn't have his keys, which is very, very unusual. Usually, he's the one that lets everyone into the building when Principal Chowder is late.

THE VERY BRIEF SOLUTION SCENE IS NOT INCLUDED IN REVIEW SCRIPTS. IF YOU ABSOLUTELY MUST HAVE THE ENTIRE ACTING COPY BEFORE MAKING A DECISION ABOUT PRODUCING, PLEASE CONTACT US: 330-678-3893
mysteriesbymoushey@gmail.com

APPENDIX

COSTUMES

Jumper (Sheryl)
Suit and tie (Mark)
Trendy clothes, almost identical if possible (Tiffanys)
Athletic wear (Jocks)
Slashed outfit from The GAP with labels/price tags - can be made (Janis)
Similar trendy outfits, slashed (The Grungies)
Hair pieces, barrettes, etc. (The Grungies)
Food service uniforms; must have belts (The Lunch Ladies)
Wigs with buns (Edith & Martha)
Hairnets (Lunch Ladies)
Coveralls - or something similar (The Maintenance Guys)

PROPS

Poster for door
Nametags (all characters)
Sign "TIFFANYS ARE TALENT QUEENS" (Tiffany One and Troy)
Order forms for "Lunch Lady Gourmet Cookbook" (Lunch Ladies)
Programs to pass out with the "planned" acts; (Participants, Sheryl & Mark)
Cell phone (Sheryl)
Temporary Tattoos, fake piercings, etc. (The Grungies)
Spatulas (Lunch Ladies) tucked into belt
Tool belts with tools (Maintenance Guys)
Short plungers (Maintenance Guys)
Rigged short plunger - sawed halfway through (Gunther, Solution Scene)

Short plunger, wrapped with duct tape (Gunther, Curtain Call)
Rolls of duct tape, different colors (Dana)
Many keys on retractable reel-type key holders (Maintenance Guys) Note: Gunther does not have keys, just holder)
Individual Message slips (Mark & Sheryl)
List of prizes (Mark)
Music, props for songs (All)
Coke (Martha, for circulating and during play)
Coke , unopened (Librarian)
Purse (Martha) contains: torn piece School Newspaper with words scrawled; rolls of “money” - paper rolled with a dollar bill on outside, secured with a rubber band
Appliance dolly (Martha)
Clue Hunt/Solution (depends on how you do it)- School newspaper fragment;
School newspaper, body; Clue Packets on clipboards (one per team); Ballots
Gift bags to use to submit ballots (one for each suspect)

INCLUDED WITH PRODUCTION PACK

Individual pages with lyrics and hints for performance CD
with 2 tracks of each song; one with vocals, one without Our
copy of the school newspaper with hints on how to create.
Production Manual
Sample clue hunt, flow chart, solution sheet and instructions on how to design your own and how to collect and
“grade” them. Blank flow chart.
Ballots (if not using a complete solution)
Sample flyers for doors
Sample program
How to do prizes (if you choose to award)
Production Notes

OPTIONAL

For a small fee, we have printed versions of everything in the Production Packet, including the Production Manual which is the same for all shows.

TIFF-SPEAK GLOSSARY - feel free to add your own!

b-fide - bonafide, real badger - bad dresser barfy - got sick

‘chine - car (short for machine)

cog - to think crammed - thick

crustin’ - old forsooth - really

frosh - baby garbs - clothes

ginger - money glommed -

learned hearse - practice, rehearse.

inop - inoperative, not working Jan -

short for January - long time ago.

jello, naff, rattling - really cool

nominal - major non-funct -

non-functioning non-negot -

real, actual nurts - from

“nurture” - parents

OhferPete - honestly
parktoad - lazy plum
- right, truth Pooh-
bear - gentle.
Poperooni- father
prune, snuff, snip - cut off, stop
prob - probably
pudding, chowder - jerk
purch - buy
rattling - cooler than jello
ribbited - died rif or chew
- talk, say rified - talk,
say rig - rigid scrap -
disrespect 'slutely -
absolutely, for sure snaff
- steal/borrowed spatula -
stupid; shortened to
'splat' spec - (spesh)
special sponze - shop
stub - meeting
unexpectedly tatering -
hanging out tend - see
tweakie - cute tweet -
sweet twingie - painful
vokin' - sing waffle -
credit card wrath - anger
(wrathy - angry) WUH -
"whatever" + "duh" You
chew! - You lie zokay -
it's okay