

I WAS A TEENAGE CHAMELEON

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By **Eddie McPherson**

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SYNOPSIS: Average Joe and Jane Doe are ordinary teenagers who want to fit in – their dreams of becoming popular overshadow everything else in their lives. Joe’s ultimate goal is to make the school’s paddleball team because playing paddleball is the ultimate in coolness at Typical High. Meanwhile, Jane sacrifices her lifelong friendship with her nerdy BFF, Eunice, in order to be accepted by the most popular girls in school. The Symbolic Ladder of Popularity stands on stage throughout the play, reminding the protagonists (as well as the audience) of their ultimate goal. They **MUST** reach the top of that ladder – no matter what the cost.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(12 MEN, 14 WOMEN, 0 - 2 EITHER, EXTRAS)

AVERAGE JOE (m)..... Dreams of high school popularity.
(184 lines)

JOE2 (m)..... Joe’s conscience. *(58 lines)*

JANE DOE (f)..... Wants popularity more than anything
else. *(267 lines)*

JANE2 (f)..... Jane’s conscience. *(92 lines)*

CHAZ (m)..... Big man on campus and captain of the
paddleball team. *(51 lines)*

DOUG (m)..... A member of Chad’s posse. *(16 lines)*

LOUIE (m)..... Another of Chaz’s posse. *(15 lines)*

FIRST REPORTER (m/f)..... Acts as the Narrator . Can also play other
roles. See doubling suggestions below.
(34 lines)

- SECOND REPORTER (m/f) Acts as the other Narrator. Can also play other roles. See doubling suggestions below. (28 lines)
- MOM (f) Joe's overprotective mother. (41 lines)
- DAD (m) Joe's dad. (29 lines)
- SISTER (f) Joe's sister. (15 lines)
- EUNICE (f) One of the nerd group. Jane's lifelong friend. (62 lines)
- DEXTER (m) A nerd. (37 lines)
- GRETCHEN (f) A nerd. (12 lines)
- DORIS (f) A nerd. (4 lines)
- WALTER (m) A nerd. (19 lines)
- MELVIN (m) A nerd. (16 lines)
- CANDI (f) Epitome of what it is to be popular. (111 lines)
- ALEXIS (f) Candi's typical simpleminded friend. (52 lines)
- ANITA (f) Another in Candi's entourage. Longs for a nice boyfriend. (44 lines)
- SUMMER* (f) Another of Candi's friends. Pretends she enjoys her life. (22 lines)

I WAS A TEENAGE CHAMELEON

BRAD (m).....A guy with a bad habit (A bubblehead).
(33 lines)

DERRICK (m)Brad's friend (A bubblehead). (11 lines)

LAUREN (f)Another of Brad's friends (A
bubblehead). (7 lines)

COACH (m).....Head coach of the losing paddleball
team. (32 lines)

MS. PETERSON (f).....A school custodian. (2 lines)

MS. LIPMAN (f)Leader of the Kazoo Band. (12 lines)

** A note about the character of Summer: Summer doesn't enjoy her existence with the other popular girls, and the comments she makes in the play aren't really heard by the other characters. She says all her lines with a big, fake smile. She's hurting on the inside, but looks happy as a lark on the outside. She's crying out for help.*

*** You may choose to use new actors to play the dorks in the kazoo band in addition to other actors.*

DOUBLING SUGGESTIONS

The reporters (who can be 2 males, 2 females, or 1 male and 1 female) can easily play other characters such as family members, the nerds, coach, Ms. Peterson, the bubbleheads, Ms. Lipman, etc. with simple costume changes. This would be fun and may better fit your casting needs.

SYMBOLISM

Average Joe and Jane Doe are, of course, symbolic of the “everyman” archetype. They represent practically every middle and high school student in our country.

Paddleball can represent any sport that may be popular in any given region of the country.

Bubbles probably signify the use of drugs and lollipops smoking cigarettes or marijuana.

The Kazoo Band embodies any performance-based activity such as drama, band, color guard etc.

The jackets worn by each group of kids symbolize how those kids are judged by their outward appearance. For example, when Candi and her “cool” friends see Jane wearing the same type of jacket they wear, they begin to be nice and talk to her. Joe and Jane change their jackets according to who they are hanging out with at the time. This, of course, also symbolizes the chameleon changing color to fit into its environment.

Most of the play is performed in a representational acting style (*characters interacting with one another without the knowledge that there is an audience watching them*). However, at times it switches to a presentational style (*i.e. when the reporters speak to the audience and when some of the other characters stand and recite lines over the heads of the audience*). Switching from representational to presentational style should flow smoothly with little to no interruption in the action on stage.

Joe2 and Jane2 represent Joe’s and Jane’s consciences. They can’t be seen by the other cast members. Usually, when Joe and Jane are speaking to their conscience, everyone else on stage freezes.

The freestanding ladder is on stage throughout the show. You may or may not choose to decorate it. A sparkling sign reading “Popularity Ladder” should be posted somewhere on or near the ladder. The ladder represents “the climb to popularity” and is actually used a few times in the show. Please remember to use safety precautions.

PROPERTIES

- ☐ Various types of jackets
- ☐ Several Paddleballs
- ☐ Gym bags
- ☐ Two fake microphones
- ☐ Newspaper
- ☐ Skillet
- ☐ Spatula
- ☐ Plates
- ☐ Cups
- ☐ Nerd glasses
- ☐ Bottles of bubbles
- ☐ Kazoos
- ☐ Coach’s whistle
- ☐ Fake \$20 bill
- ☐ Knee pads
- ☐ Wrist bands
- ☐ Monopoly (or other type of) fake money
- ☐ Push broom
- ☐ Conductor’s Baton (or simple wooden stick)
- ☐ Four small flags
- ☐ Various school books
- ☐ Small trash can for locker scene
- ☐ Banana
- ☐ Cell phone
- ☐ A toy (or real) puppy
- ☐ Paddleball wrapped as a gift
- ☐ Tissue
- ☐ Notebook
- ☐ Lunch trays

- ☐ Bottle of after-shave lotion
- ☐ Wads of paper
- ☐ Rubber chicken
- ☐ Cans of soda
- ☐ Bowls of popcorn
- ☐ Various flavored lollipops
- ☐ Sleeping bags
- ☐ Two different outdoor garbage cans
- ☐ Two small bungee cords
- ☐ Various toy weapons
- ☐ Native American costume
- ☐ Automobile magazine
- ☐ Park bench
- ☐ Sound Effects: School bell & pre-recorded flute music

SET

The set is simple. A short row of lockers (real or fake) stands stage right, a table representing a cafeteria table stands center stage, and a few risers (as many as you need depending on your cast size) are stage left. Other scenes such as the dining room in Joe's house, the living room in Alexis' house, and the park are suggested by bringing out a couple of simple furniture pieces and placing them in front of the permanent set.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

AT RISE:

JANE and JANE2 stand in front of the lockers.

JANE2: *(JANE2 is putting a jacket on JANE.)* Look how beautiful that looks on you. That is totally your color.

JANE: I don't know. It's a little bright.

JANE2: That's the kind of stuff they wear.

JANE: I'm not part of their group yet.

JANE2: But you will be.

JANE: Do you really think I could become one of them? Could look like them? Could walk and talk like them?

JANE2: Of course you can! *(A popular song plays as a group of GIRLS wearing similar jackets enter. They pantomime talking cheerily, flipping their hair wildly then exiting the opposite side of the stage. Music out. JANE turns to JANE2.)*

JANE: I can't! *(She takes the jacket off.)*

JANE2: What are you doing?

JANE: You saw them, they're beautiful!

JANE2: So?

JANE: They're confident!

JANE2: So?

JANE: And most importantly, they're popular!

JANE2: *(Helping her with the jacket.)* Here, put this back on.

JANE: No! *(She runs out.)*

JANE2: Wait, you can't give up so easy! Jane, come back! *(She runs out with the jacket.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

JOE and JOE2 stand in front of the risers.

JOE2: *(JOE2 is holding up a nice jacket to JOE.)* Put it on before he gets here.

JOE: I'm telling you, it will never work.

JOE2: Of course it will; this is the kind of stuff popular guys wear!
(*He forces the jacket onto JOE.*) Stand up straight. (*JOE does.*)
Wait. (*JOE2 rummages through a bag and pulls out a paddleball paddle.*) Here.

JOE: Where did you get this?

JOE2: Never mind, just hold it, he's coming! (*CHAZ enters wearing a similar jacket to the one JOE is wearing.*)

CHAZ: Hey, you!

JOE2: Uh oh. (*He quickly removes the jacket from JOE.*)

JOE: (*Nervous.*) Me?

CHAZ: What are you doing with that? (*Points to the paddle.*)

JOE: Uh...well...

CHAZ: (*Turns and yells.*) Hey, guys, take a look at this! (*DOUG and LOUIE, wearing similar jackets to the one JOE2 is holding, enter and cross to CHAZ. They each carry a paddle.*) You're not allowed to hold one of these unless you're on the team!

DOUG: Who do you think you are? This is an official paddle.

CHAZ: Do you know what we do to guys who go around touching things that don't belong to them?

JOE: Let them go quietly with a warning?

CHAZ: Guess again.

JOE: Beat them to a pulp and leave them for dead?

CHAZ: You're getting closer. (*They're now surrounding JOE.*)

JOE: (*Swallows hard.*) Come on, guys. It won't happen again. It's all a misunderstanding. (*Nervous giggle.*)

CHAZ: It won't be so funny if administration happens to find a bottle of bubbles in your locker.

JOE: Bubbles? But I never touch the stuff.

CHAZ: I know that, and you know that, but administration doesn't know that.

DOUG: And if we see you touching another official paddle, we might just have to take it and break it over somebody's head.

JOE: But wouldn't that be a waste of a perfectly good paddle?

LOUIE: He's right, you know. These things aren't that cheap.

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Good point, he's right, never thought of that... (*Et cetera.*)

CHAZ: Shut up! *(To JOE.)* You remember what we said. *(To the others.)* Let's go. *(They exit as a popular song plays.)*

JOE: *(Music out as JOE2 approaches.)* Look what you did. I was nearly killed just now.

JOE2: Don't worry, this is only a slight setback. We're going to make you popular if it's the last thing we do.

JOE: Okay, but it's more fun being popular if you're alive to enjoy it! *(He hurries out.)*

JOE2: *(Holding up the jacket.)* Wait, you forgot the jacket!

JANE2: *(Offstage.)* Wait! *(JANE enters, followed by JANE2 who is still holding up the jacket. JANE and JOE meet center stage, face to face. After staring for a second, they both drop their heads, pass each other and exit with JANE2 following JANE and JOE2 following JOE. The lights go out. FIRST and SECOND REPORTER enter holding fake microphones and speak to the audience.)*

FIRST REPORTER: Well, June, it looks like another typical day at Typical High School in Typical Town U.S.A.

SECOND REPORTER: That's right, John, and if you look around this typical school, you'll find a typical row of lockers;

FIRST REPORTER: A typical cafeteria that serves that typical cafeteria food and the typical bleachers where the fans sit every Friday night to watch all the exciting paddleball games.

SECOND REPORTER: You know, that's right, John. Paddleball is big in these parts.

FIRST REPORTER: Yes, ma'am, if you play paddleball, you're one of the elite; one of the coooooool kids. The in crowd. The priv-i-legged.

SECOND REPORTER: We get it, John. Tonight's story focuses on a guy named Average Joe. There he is now. *(JOE enters and stands center stage as he looks out to the audience.)* I'm afraid Joe has trouble fitting in, John.

FIRST REPORTER: He has bought into the idea that the grass is always greener on the other side of the paddleball court.

SECOND REPORTER: Look, here comes Jane Doe. (*JANE enters and stands beside JOE.*) This is her story, too. Her struggle to make it through high school recognized as someone important, someone who is admired and placed upon the symbolic pedestal of popularity.

FIRST REPORTER: (*Crosses to the ladder.*) What won't Jane Doe and Average Joe do to climb this ladder? How far are they willing to go to be the one who stands on the coveted pedestal of recognition?

SECOND REPORTER: Right you are, John. (*As the kitchen set is brought out.*) Let's continue our story at the home of Average Joe.

FIRST REPORTER: Let's!

SECOND REPORTER: He has just gotten ready for school and is eating his typical breakfast just as he does every typical weekday morning before school.

FIRST REPORTER: This should be exciting, June. (*They exit or move to the side and watch the action. If the REPORTERS are doubling as the PARENTS, they simply move into the scene. There is a table and four chairs. DAD sits in one of the chairs reading his newspaper. SISTER sits eating her breakfast and JOE sits at another place looking none too happy. MOM enters wearing an apron and holding a skillet and spatula.*)

MOM: More hotcakes, anyone?

SISTER: Me! Me!

MOM: Joe?

JOE: No thanks, Mom, I'm not hungry.

MOM: Not hungry? But you're always hungry.

DAD: He's nervous. This is a big day for him, right, sport?

JOE: I guess so.

MOM: What's going on here that I don't know about?

DAD: We were going to wait to tell you, but...

MOM: (*Becoming nervous.*) Tell me what?

JOE: (*Might as well tell.*) Mom, I'm trying out for the paddleball team today.

MOM: You're what?

SISTER: He only wants to play so all the girls will think he's cool.

MOM: No son of mine is going to kill himself playing paddleball.

JOE: But Mom...

MOM: Don't "But Mom" me. That sport is far too dangerous.

JOE: It's not dangerous.

DAD: Now, dear, don't forget I played paddleball when I was in high school.

MOM: *(To her husband.)* I do remember, *benchwarmer!* The answer is still no!

JOE: But...

MOM: The FINAL word! *(JOE2 enters and motions JOE over to him as EVERYONE else freezes.)*

JOE2: Psssst! How's it going over there?

JOE: She says she's not going to let me play.

JOE2: Just as I suspected. Your dad should remind her that he played paddleball when he was in high school.

JOE: He just did.

JOE2: *(Thinking.)* Hmmmm. Tell her you won't ever ask for anything else as long as you live.

JOE: *(Snaps his fingers.)* Good one! *(Rushes over to MOM as they unfreeze.)* Mom, if you let me play paddleball I'll never ask for another thing as long as I live.

MOM: The answer is no!

JOE: *(Runs back to JOE2.)* She said the answer is no.

JOE2: Tell her she lets your sister do anything she wants.

JOE: *(Rushing to MOM.)* You let Sister do anything she wants!

MOM: I won't discuss it any further.

JOE: *(Back to JOE2.)* She won't discuss it any further.

JOE2: Everybody who is anybody plays paddleball.

JOE: *(Back to MOM.)* Everybody who is anybody plays paddleball.

MOM: If everybody jumped off a bridge would you?

JOE: *(Back to JOE2.)* She played the "jump off a bridge" card.

JOE2: You're going to have to go for the heartstrings. Are you up for it?

JOE: I'm up for it. Tell me! *(JOE2 whispers to him.)* Why didn't I think of that?

JOE2: Now go get her, tiger!

JOE: *(Rushes to MOM.)* Mom, the reason you won't let me play paddleball is because you don't love me.

MOM: Now, Joe, don't say that. (*Putting her hands on his shoulders.*)

JOE: (*Solemnly, with pouty lips and puppy dog eyes.*) But you won't let me play paddleball.

MOM: (*To DAD.*) Well, aren't you going to say anything?

DAD: Ah, let the boy at least try out. Who knows, he may not make the team.

JOE: I may not make the team. (*This time he overdoes the pouty lips and puppy dog eyes.*)

MOM: (*Long pause.*) Well, it's against my better judgment...

JOE: Then you'll let me play?!

MOM: The first time you get a black eye, don't come running to me.

JOE: I won't! Mom, you're the best! Thanks, Dad! I'll see you guys this afternoon! (*Rushes back over to JOE2.*) She's going to let me try out!

JOE2: I heard and (*Holds up a gym bag.*) I'm ready!

JOE: Let's go! (*JOE and JOE2 exit running.*)

SISTER: Mom, I can't believe you gave in to him so easily.

MOM: Eat your breakfast. (*To DAD.*) And some help you were.

DAD: What did I say? (*He hides behind his newspaper.*)

SISTER: Mom, will you take me to the mall after school this afternoon?

MOM: I've got a hundred things to do.

SISTER: You let Joe do anything he wants.

MOM: The answer is no.

SISTER: I'll never ask for anything ever again.

MOM: Good.

SISTER: You don't love me.

MOM: We'll go right after I pick you up from school.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

The DORKS are sitting at the cafeteria table. DEXTER stands before them.

FIRST REPORTER: Let's move on to later that morning right before school, shall we, June?

SECOND REPORTER: Oh look, John, a group of your classic dorks are carrying on their typical monthly meeting of the nerd-type club.

FIRST REPORTER: Isn't that Eunice sitting there beside Jane?

SECOND REPORTER: That's right, John - I do believe they have been friends since elementary school. Shhhhhh, we don't want to disturb them. *(In the cafeteria, JANE sits with the DORK group, including EUNICE, who is dressed as the typical nerd. They all wear similar jackets.)*

DEXTER: I want to thank everyone for arriving to school so early for our monthly meeting. I think it's been a very successful school year so far. Administration just approved the starting of our new club: The Defense Against Popular Kids. Just because we should be proud of our typical dorkiness doesn't mean we should tolerate constant harassment or name calling from these popular kids, a.k.a. the Evil Empire, inside the practice gym which we commonly refer to as the Death Star. *(Fist in the air.)* Power to the dork side!

ALL: Power to the dork side!

DEXTER: Gretchen will now read the minutes of our last meeting. Gretchen?

GRETCHEN: After the meeting was called to order, we discussed in depth the social relevance of pocket protectors and fanny packs. Our second annual calculator games tournament was a great success, and congratulations go out to our very own Marvin Crump and Penelope Hooper, who tied for first place. *(EVERYONE claps politely. GRETCHEN sits.)*

DEXTER: Thank you, Gretchen. I thought we might share some exciting things we've accomplished in the past month so that we might celebrate these achievements together. Doris Schutt?

DORIS: I proved to my history teacher that rhetorical questions can, indeed, be answered. *(Starts to sit down but thinks of something else.)* Oh, and I wrote a book last weekend teaching people how to count in binary, hexadecimal and roman numerals. *(Everyone claps.)*

WALTER: As I was home searching through my drawer full of spare hard drives, I found an old alarm clock, which I reprogrammed so it reads in Klingon. *(Everyone claps.)*

MELVIN: I have learned this year that it's cool to wear a necktie to school because it's stylish and the chicks dig it. (*WALTER raises his hand.*)

WALTER: What's a chick?

DEXTER: Well, that draws this meeting to a close. I know we are all excited about our weekend filled with hours of library reading and nights tuned into the Sci-Fi Channel. But whatever we do, always remember... Power to the dork side!

ALL: Power to the dork side! (*Everyone disperses.*)

EUNICE: Jane, I can't believe you actually came to one of our meetings.

JANE: I thought I had a tutoring session this morning, but it's tomorrow.

EUNICE: I want you to meet the club president. Dexter, this is my friend, Jane.

DEXTER: Hi, there's someone here who wanted to meet you. Melvin, come on.

MELVIN: (*Approaching sheepishly, pushing his glasses up with his finger.*) A duck's quack doesn't have an echo.

JANE: I beg your pardon?

MELVIN: A duck's quack doesn't have an echo. That's a little known fact unfamiliar to most people. Tom Sawyer was the first novel written on a typewriter.

JANE: That's very interest—

MELVIN: Did you know that it's cool to wear a necktie because it's stylish and the chicks dig it?

JANE: Well...

MELVIN: Would you like to go out with me? You look somewhat desperate, so I thought I might have a chance.

JANE: I think maybe we should just part ways.

MELVIN: Wait, give me one last chance. If I'm lucky, you'll tell me you're into weird stalker types.

JANE: Have a good day. (*DEXTER slaps MELVIN'S arm.*)

DEXTER: To be so smart, you sure are dumb. (*They exit.*)

EUNICE: I was about to go grab some breakfast. Want to go with me?

JANE: That sounds good, I'm starved.

JANE2: (*Rushing to JANE forcing the nice jacket on her as EUNICE freezes.*) Jane, here quick! They're coming!

JANE: Who?

JANE2: Never mind, just trust me! (*She quickly puts the nice jacket back on JANE then refers to EUNICE.*) You have got to tell Dork Girl to get lost.

JANE: I can't do that. (*CANDI and ALEXIS enter, stop and pantomime a conversation.*)

JANE2: You have to grab your opportunities while they're standing in front of you.

EUNICE: (*Unfreezing.*) Jane, are you okay? You seem preoccupied.

JANE: Not at all. My mind was just on other things. Well, bye now.

EUNICE: But what about breakfast?

JANE: No thanks, I'm not hungry.

EUNICE: You just said you were starving.

JANE: That sounds great; see you later. Bye.

EUNICE: Uh, bye. (*EUNICE drops her head and exits. Our attention goes to CANDI and ALEXIS as JANE2 helps JANE primp.*)

ALEXIS: Ouch, my ear is still burning.

CANDI: What happened to your ear?

ALEXIS: Silly me, I was ironing this morning and the phone rang.

CANDI: Ouch! Oh, I love that scarf you're wearing.

ALEXIS: Thank you, but I'm going to have to take it back; it's way too tight.

CANDI: I really dread going to first period and seeing what I made on that stupid history test.

ALEXIS: Me too!

CANDI: How do you think you did?

ALEXIS: I thought the questions were easy.

CANDI: Then what's the problem?

ALEXIS: The answers were hard.

JANE: (*Approaching.*) Hey, girls.

CANDI: (*Looking her up and down.*) Do we know you?

JANE: I'm Jane Doe. We spoke briefly yesterday. You pulled out in front of me in the school parking lot and almost crashed into my car, then you honked your horn and told me to eat your dust.

CANDI: *(Pause, then with excitement.)* That was YOU? Now I rememberrrrrrrrrr.

ALEXIS: *(To JANE.)* That's a nice jacket.

JANE: This old thing? Why, thank you.

CANDI: *(In one breath.)* We were just going to stand over here and discuss something useless like the school's blood drive so the less fortunate can see us standing here talking and feel bad about themselves and wish they were us.

JANE: Cool. I give blood every chance I get.

ALEXIS: Anybody who is sick enough to get my blood sure is lucky.

JANE: What type are you?

ALEXIS: I'm an outgoing cat lover, but what does that have to do with what we're talking about?

JANE: Well... *(They continue a conversation in pantomime. BRAD enters with DERRICK and they meet center stage looking pretty shady. They don't look at one another.)*

BRAD: Did you get it?

DERRICK: I got it.

BRAD: *(Pause.)* Well, give it to me.

DERRICK: In broad daylight?

BRAD: You have a point. Meet me at the bleachers after school. We'll make the swap then.

DERRICK: That sounds safer.

BRAD: And whatever you do, keep the stuff in your pocket. *(They separate and exit in different directions. Back at the lockers, CANDI, ALEXIS, and JANE are talking. They are now joined by ANITA and SUMMER. The GIRLS are laughing out loud. JANE isn't sure what else to do, so she starts laughing along with them.)*

CANDI: That's not the best part. And then at lunch yesterday when I walked past her table, she actually moved over as though she were inviting me to sit with her.

ALEXIS: No, she didn't.

ANITA: You've got to be kidding.

SUMMER: *(Smiling.)* I wonder if this dress makes me look fat.

CANDI: Needless to say I walked right past her.

JANE: That's awesome, Candi! You walked right past her. *(The GIRLS turn and look at JANE, then return to their conversation.)*

CANDI: As I was saying, I ignored her completely and found a more suitable place to sit.

ALEXIS: With our kind of people.

ANITA: People who know how to dress.

SUMMER: *(Smiling.)* I hope my teeth are white enough.

CANDI: Did you see what she's wearing today?

ANITA: That dress is just awful. Awful as in when a guy says he's going to call and you wait by the phone for days but it NEVER rings.

ALEXIS: It's just hideous.

SUMMER: *(Smiling.)* I cried myself to sleep last night.

JANE: Atrocious is more the word for her dress.

CANDI: Do you even know who we're talking about?

JANE: Yes.

CANDI: Really?

JANE: Yes.

CANDI: Really?

JANE: No. *(Drops her head.)*

CANDI: I've never noticed you before. Are you new to Typical?

JANE: Yes.

ANITA: How long have you lived here?

JANE: Twelve years.

GIRLS: Twelve years?

JANE: Uh, I mean 144 months.

ALEXIS: Welcome.

CANDI: I'm Candi, you met Alexis.

ALEXIS: I sure am lucky my mom called me Alexis.

JANE: Why's that?

ALEXIS: Because that's what all the kids call me, duuuuh.

CANDI: Girls, introduce yourselves.

ANITA: Hello, Anita Mann.

JANE: Don't we all. *(She laughs but the other girls don't.)*

ANITA: Anita Mann is my name.

JANE: Oh. Sorry.

SUMMER: I'm Summer.

CANDI: She smiles all the time. ALL the time, just like a ray of sunshine. Right, Summer?

SUMMER: *(Smiles as she shakes JANE'S hand.)* Please put me out of my misery. *(DEXTER runs through.)*

CANDI: Hey, dork! Why are you running?

DEXTER: *(Stops for a moment.)* I'm trying to prevent a fight!

CANDI: Between whom?

DEXTER: Between me and that bully chasing me! *(CHAZ enters quickly.)*

CHAZ: Slow down, you nerd. I'm gonna pound you!

DEXTER: *(Running off stage.)* Ahhhhhhhhhh!

CHAZ: *(Stopping long enough to speak to the girls.)* Hello, girls.

CANDI: *(Batting her eyes.)* Hello, Chaz. *(CHAZ runs off.)*

CHAZ: Get back here, dork!

ALEXIS: *(Looking offstage.)* Girls, act casual, she's coming now.

CANDI: Shhh. *(The GIRLS form a tight circle leaving JANE alone. EUNICE enters and stands at her locker. JANE looks shocked. She suddenly realizes it's EUNICE that the other GIRLS have been making fun of. JANE rushes to the circle and squeezes herself inside it, hiding. EUNICE finishes at her locker then turns and crosses and sees the circle of GIRLS.)*

EUNICE: *(Friendly.)* Candice? Alexis? What are you girls up to? *(Without looking at EUNICE, the GIRLS snicker, bow their heads and exit, leaving JANE standing there. JANE has taken off her nice, new jacket and it lies in the floor at her feet. EUNICE shouts off to the GIRLS.)* Call me if you want to get together sometime! *(She turns and sees JANE.)* Oh Jane, I didn't see you standing there.

JANE: *(Nervous.)* I just walked in. Just now. Walked in from out there. From right out there to right here. This very spot. Here I stand. *(Beat.)* So, what's uuuuup?

EUNICE: I forgot one of my notebooks. Oh, would you like to go to the mall after school? I need to pick up a new fanny pack.

JANE: I would, but it seems I'm...sick.

EUNICE: Sick?

JANE: Very sick. *(She coughs.)*

EUNICE: I'm sorry to hear that. Maybe we can go another time. *(She sees JANE'S jacket on the floor and picks it up.)* One of the girls must have dropped her jacket.

JANE: That's strange, a jacket just lying on the ground that way.

EUNICE: I'll take it over to lost-and-found.

JANE: You don't have to do that. *(She grabs one of the sleeves.)*

EUNICE: I don't mind.

JANE: But you really don't have to do that.

EUNICE: I really don't mind. *(They're playing tug of war.)*

JANE: Give me my jacket!

EUNICE: *(Taken aback as she stops pulling.)* Did you say your jacket?

JANE: *(Too late to take her words back.)* Yes, I said...my jacket.

EUNICE: *(Letting go.)* I'm sorry, I didn't know.

JANE: *(Composes herself as she ties the arms of the jacket around her waist.)* Well, now you do know. It's...my...jacket.

EUNICE: It's pretty.

JANE: Thank you.

EUNICE: I'd better get to class. I hope you get to feeling better.

JANE: I will. *(EUNICE starts to exit; JANE feels guilty.)* Eunice?

EUNICE: Yes?

JANE: *(Starts to speak, pauses.)* Never mind. *(EUNICE exits as JANE2 runs in and crosses to JANE.)*

JANE2: You did it! You actually had a conversation with them.

JANE: *(Looking off where EUNICE exited.)* I'm sorry, did you say something?

JANE2: The Popular girls! You were talking to them! And better yet, they talked back. *(Running to the ladder.)* That puts you higher on the popularity ladder.

JANE: *(Snapping out of her "feeling guilty" moment.)* It does?

JANE2: *(Has climbed half way up the ladder.)* Everything looks so much better from up here!

JANE: I knew it did! I just knew it! *(They freeze as the REPORTERS enter and cross to them.)*

FIRST REPORTER: Well, June, she did it. Jane made that first tough step to being noticed.

SECOND REPORTER: That's what she's always wanted, John. *(COACH and the paddleball TEAM enter at the bleachers.)*

FIRST REPORTER: Look, it's later that day.

SECOND REPORTER: Later that day at paddleball practice, as a matter of fact.

FIRST REPORTER: Thanks for clearing that up, June.

SECOND REPORTER: No problem, John. Let's watch, shall we?

COACH: (*Blows his whistle.*) Okay, boys, I want to see those paddleballs moving! Move it! Move it! Peterson, what's the matter with you? Hit that ball, boy!

CHAZ: Yes, sir!

COACH: Simpson, I want to see more wrist action!

DOUG: Yes, sir!

COACH: (*Turns to LOUIE who is paddling hard with no string or ball.*) Stump, where's your string, boy?

LOUIE: I lost it, sir!

COACH: You're paddling at nothing!

LOUIE: Yes, sir!

COACH: Stop! Everybody, stop! Stop! Stop! Stop! (*Everyone stops practicing and looks at COACH.*) You are the most wretched paddleball team that has ever walked the halls of Typical High!

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Cool. Wow. Awesome. (*Etcetera.*)

COACH: Wretched is not a good thing.

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Oh. Bummer. Boy, do I feel dumb. (*Et cetera.*)

COACH: (*Holding up LOUIE'S paddle.*) I have a player practicing without a string. Pathetic! (*Walking among the players.*) A paddleball player without his string is a daffodil without its petals, a gardenia blossom without its springtime aroma. (*Face to face with LOUIE.*) And other beautiful metaphors I have yet to think of. Now comes your ultimate punishment, boy!

LOUIE: (*Worried and it shows.*) P...punishment, sir?

COACH: Punishment, Stump! You will apologize!

LOUIE: Yes...yes, sir!

COACH: Say you're sorry, rookie!

LOUIE: You're sorry, rookie!

COACH: (*Sarcastically.*) Oh, we have a comedian in our midst. That's real funny. Ain't he funny, men? (*The JOCKS laugh hysterically.*)

COACH: QUIET! (*Laughter stops abruptly, to LOUIE.*) Give me twenty, boy!

LOUIE: Twenty, sir?

COACH: Twenty, rookie! Give me twenteeeeee!

LOUIE: (*Digs in his pockets and pulls out a twenty dollar bill.*) Here's twenty, sir.

DOUG: That's not what he means, dummy!

COACH: Shut up, Simpson! (*COACH snatches the bill and pockets it.*) Now, listen to me gooooooooood! Paddleball is ninety percent mental! The other half is physical! We have lost four out of four games so far this season! And do you know why we have lost four out of four games this season?

DOUG: (*Raising his hand.*) I think it's mostly because we haven't scored.

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Good point. Yep. Well said. He's good. (*Etcetera.*)

COACH: Quiet! Never forget, boys: Teamwork means never having to take all the blame!

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) That's right! You know it! Amen! (*Etcetera.*)

COACH: Eagles may soar, but weasels don't get sucked into jet engines!

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Wow! Sweet! That's us! (*Etcetera.*)

COACH: (*Caught up in the moment.*) The early bird may get the worm, but it's the second mouse who gets the cheese!

ALL: (*Ad-lib.*) Yeah! Preach it! Glory! (*Etcetera.*)

COACH: A bird in the hand makes blowing your nose difficult!

ALL: Yes, sir!

COACH: Now let's see some paddleballing!

ALL: Yes, sir! (*A 'Champion' song plays as everyone practices with his paddleball. They're all terrible. LOUIE continues to hit at nothing as he performs behind-the-back and under-the-knee maneuvers. JOE runs in with all his gear including knee pads – wrist bands, socks that go to his knees – the whole nine yards. He stretches and runs in place then touches his toes etc.*)

COACH: (*Music out, approaching JOE.*) Well, well, what do we have here?

JOE: I'm trying out for next year's squad, sir.

COACH: Not MY team?

JOE: Yes, sir. (*The JOCKS laugh.*)

CHAZ: Hey look, he thinks he's an instant paddleball star! (*ALL laugh as CHAZ approaches JOE.*) Excuse me, but may I speak frankly with you?

JOE: Sure.

CHAZ: Okay. You're a big wiener! (*ALL laugh.*)

COACH: Quiet, boys! Take five! (*They have a seat in the bleachers. COACH turns to JOE.*) So you want to be on the paddleball team, huh?

JOE: Yes, sir!

COACH: Why is it important for you to play paddleball?

JOE: I love the concept of teamwork, persistence, and the satisfaction of knowing you've contributed to a victorious win.

COACH: Wrong! Peterson, show this want-to-be why playing on a paddleball team is important.

CHAZ: Yes, sir.

COACH: (*Guarding JOE with his arm.*) You'd better back up for this. (*CHAZ stands clinching tightly to his paddleball, holding it up in the air. CANDI runs in and sees him, then shouts to offstage.*)

CANDI: Here he is, girls! (*ALEXIS, ANITA and SUMMER run in and surround him.*) Chaz, are we still on for the school dance Friday night?

CHAZ: I'll think about it.

CANDI: He'll think about it. (*The GIRLS scream with excitement.*)

ALEXIS: What about me?

CHAZ: Senior prom. (*The GIRLS scream.*)

ANITA: And me, don't forget me! I NEED A MAN!

CHAZ: Homecoming dance. (*He points to SUMMER.*) Don't call me, and I might call you. (*The GIRLS scream and run out, excited.*)

COACH: Be seated, Peterson. (*CHAZ returns to his seat as he high-fives and chest bumps the other players. COACH turns to JOE.*) That, my boy, is why you play paddleball.

JOE: Oh.

COACH: You see that ladder, boy?

JOE: Yes, sir.

COACH: Playing paddle ball will put you at the top of that ladder. Don't forget.

JOE: I won't, sir.

COACH: Meet me in the practice gym in half an hour and bring your paddleball. We'll see what you're made of. After all, playing paddleball is a beautiful thing, much like a stunning woman's hair glistening in the rain or a nose hair after a sneeze.

JOE: Really, sir? Thank you, sir. I guess I'll see you guys later. *(He bends down to put his paddleball back inside his bag.)*

COACH: Okay, Typical Hyenas, give me ten laps then hit the showers. Let's go! Let's go! *(They run off hooting and hollering.)*

JOE: Coach, thank you for this chance, I won't let you down.

COACH: Why not? Everybody else does. *(He exits playing his own paddleball very clumsily. JOE2 runs on and meets JOE center stage.)*

JOE2: You did it! You're in!

JOE: But I still have to try out.

JOE2: Don't do anything to mess up this chance.

JOE: Don't worry, it's in the bag! *(He runs out.)*

JOE2: Famous last words. Wait for me! *(He runs out.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

BRAD, DERRICK and LAUREN enter extreme stage left or extreme stage right, looking around cautiously.

BRAD: The coast is clear.

DERRICK: Act quick. You got the stuff?

BRAD: Keep it down. I got it right here.

LAUREN: Is it any good?

BRAD: You think I'm trying to cheat you?

DERRICK: Both of you, cut it out. You're making a scene. Let me see it.

BRAD: *(Takes a bottle of bubbles out of his pocket.)* It's right here.

DERRICK: *(Takes the bottle and removes the lid, sniffing. He looks to LAUREN.)* It's the real stuff all right.

LAUREN: Let me see.

BRAD: Hurry before someone comes in. *(LAUREN removes the lid, takes the stick out and begins dipping it inside the bottle.)* What are you doing?

LAUREN: Quiet! *(She removes the stick and gently blows through the ring causing bubbles to float about.)*

BRAD: *(Grabs the stick and the bottle and quickly places the lid back on the bottle.)* Okay, you've tried it. Do you want it or not?

DERRICK: Okay, okay. *(Pulls a roll of Monopoly-type money from his pocket.)* Here. *(LAUREN does the same. BRAD hands DERRICK the bottle and pulls out another bottle and hands it to LAUREN.)*

BRAD: Now get out of here. *(MS. PETERSON, a custodian, enters pushing a broom.)*

MS. PETERSON: Afternoon.

BRAD: Uh, hey, Ms. Peterson. *(MS. PETERSON crosses past and turns her back to them. The BUBBLEHEADS take this opportunity to run out.)*

MS. PETERSON: Nice day to be outside playing a little boomerang tag or hitting the old paddleball around. *(She turns and sees they're gone. She shouts after them, sarcastically.)* Nice talking to you! *(She exits the opposite side of the stage pushing her broom. At the same time, the KAZOO PLAYERS enter the bleacher side of the stage. Marching in line, they play their instruments standing straight, tall and proud. They take their places on the risers as they continue to play. MS. LIPMAN enters as the kazoo conductor and takes her place in front of the group. With her baton, she begins leading the group. They play for a moment and then she stops them.)*

MS. LIPMAN: *(Speaking through her nose.)* Gretchen, you are a little flat.

GRETCHEN: My mom says I should start filling out any day now.

MS. LIPMAN: I mean you're a little flat on your instrument. Give me a C.

GRETCHEN: *(Shouting.)* C!

MS. LIPMAN: On your kazoo!

GRETCHEN: Oh. *(GRETCHEN plays a note.)* Now, give me a D. *(GRETCHEN plays the same note.)* Nice, give me an F. *(She plays the same note.)*

MS. LIPMAN: That's better. Don't forget, students, our district competition will be here before we know it and we need to be ready. Blow your kazoos if you plan to be ready. *(They do.)* Before we play our first number, I told you I had a little surprise for you all. Doris, Eunice would you come down please? *(They do.)* In a moment of divine inspiration, I decided to add movement to this piece. *(This excites everyone as they clap and cheer and some blow into their kazoos.)* Girls, are you ready? *(DORIS and EUNICE nod their heads and take their places.)* One, two and one, two, three, four. *(The kazoo playing begins as DORIS and EUNICE perform their movement; whatever that may be. Just a minute into the piece, they bring out small flags to add to their routine. This, of course, is silly, but should be played as though it's the most serious thing they've ever done.)*

MS. LIPMAN: *(Directing the GIRLS as they continue to perform.)* Girls, make sure we're telling a story! Don't lose the story! Control your breathing! It's all about control! *(CANDI, ALEXIS, ANITA and SUMMER enter, talking and laughing rather loudly. As soon as they are standing directly in front of the KAZOO PLAYERS, everyone on stage freezes. JANE2 runs in.)*

JANE2: Jane! Jane! *(JANE2 begins pacing as though very nervous as JANE makes her way out of the group and joins her, also looking a bit frantic.)* What are THEY doing here?

JANE: How should I know? I never thought they would show up at a kazoo practice.

JANE2: Think! Do they know you play the kazoo?

JANE: No, but I just joined, so they will see me playing at the next paddleball game. What was I thinking?

JANE2: That's the answer.

JANE: What's the answer?

JANE2: You can't play in the kazoo band any more. End of discussion. The kazoo must go!

JANE: But I love playing the kazoo.

JANE2: Why do you do this to me? *(Crosses to the frozen GIRLS.)* Look at them, isn't this what you have always dreamed of being?

JANE: Yes, but...

JANE2: Then you can't let them see you with this. (*Grabs and holds up the kazoo.*) In case no one has told you, playing the kazoo isn't cool.

JANE: But what am I going to do? They're already in here. I'm already in here.

JANE2: Let me think. Where's your jacket?

JANE: In my locker.

JANE2: You've got to get it... How many times have I told you to keep it with you in case of emergencies?

JANE: I forgot.

JANE2: Get back in line. Go! Hurry! (*JANE rushes back to her place in line as EVERYONE unfreezes.*)

CANDI: (*Sarcastic.*) Oh look, girls, we have walked right into the middle of kazoo practice. (*JANE ducks behind another member of the band.*)

MS. LIPMAN: (*To CANDI.*) I'm afraid I need to inform you that you are disrupting our rehearsal.

ALEXIS: We were just wondering if you took requests?

MS. LIPMAN: (*Taken aback, quite flattered.*) Why, yes. Yes, we do.

ALEXIS: Great! We request that you stop playing those kazoos. (*The GIRLS laugh.*)

ANITA: Besides, we are only having a private, civil conversation. You know, like on a first date when the guy still thinks you're exciting. (*JANE slips out and exits.*)

MS. LIPMAN: I must insist you girls remain quiet or exit the rehearsal room at once.

CANDI: What do you get when you cross a kazoo player and a goalpost?

ANITA: A goalpost that can't march. (*They laugh.*)

ALEXIS: How do you know when a kazoo player is at your door? The doorbell rings. (*No one laughs.*)

CANDI: I just had a terrible thought. If we stay here, we have to listen to them practice.

MS. LIPMAN: That's about the size of it.

CANDI: Let's go, girls. What's the difference between a kazoo and a vacuum cleaner?

ANITA: You have to plug in a vacuum cleaner before it sucks. *(The GIRLS laugh as they exit.)*

ALEXIS: I don't get it.

MS. LIPMAN: *(Turning back to her players.)* A one, a two, a three. *(The KAZOO PLAYERS begin playing as they march off stage left.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

At the lockers, JANE turns around just as JOE enters with his paddleball. They both become nervous.

JANE: Hi.

JOE: Hi.

JANE: What's that, a paddleball?

JOE: I'm trying out for next year's team. Uh, while you're here and I'm talking to you and everything, I was wondering if...

JANE: *(Excited.)* Yes?

JOE: Well, there's that new movie coming to town and... *(Points to the kazoo.)* What's that?

JANE: *(Hides the kazoo behind her back.)* Nothing.

JOE: For a minute there, it looked like a kazoo.

JANE: *(Laughs.)* Yeah, right. A kazoo. That was a good one. What's the difference between a kazoo and an onion? No one cries when you cut up a kazoo. *(She laughs.)*

JOE: Hey, listen, I'd better run.

JANE: Wait, you were telling me about that new movie coming to town.

JOE: Oh, that. I heard it was supposed to be pretty good. Well, I'll see you around. *(He exits as CANDI, ALEXIS, ANITA and SUMMER enter. She acts surprised to see them.)*

JANE: Hiiiiiiii! What are the chances of meeting you here?

CANDI: Better here than in there listening to that atrocious noise they call music.

ALEXIS: It's hideous.

ANITA: It's revolting.

SUMMER: I hate what they hate.

JANE: Noise? Oh, you must be talking about kazoo practice. Hey, what's the definition of an optimist? A kazoo player with a cell phone. *(She laughs.)* Those poor, pathetic kids and their appalling music. *(The GIRLS freeze as JANE2 enters and rushes to JANE.)*

JANE2: What are you doing?!

JANE: Faking them off. If they find out I play the kazoo, they'll never talk to me again.

JANE2: But they'll be at the paddleball game – they'll see you playing your kazoo.

JANE: Not if I quit.

JANE2: Quit? You mean you would actually quit something you love playing so much?

JANE: Just a minute ago, you were demanding that I give up the kazoo.

JANE2: I'm your conscience; I'm supposed to be indecisive.

JANE: Well, I don't care. I've made up my mind. I'm quitting the kazoo. Now, if you'll excuse me. I will go back to my friends. *(She straightens her jacket and crosses to the GIRLS who unfreeze.)*

CANDI: *(To the other GIRLS.)* What do you think, girls? Should we ask her?

ALEXIS: I'm not sure.

ANITA: It's up to you.

SUMMER: No one cares what I think.

JANE: Ask me what?

CANDI: Well, we are having a sleepover at Alexis' house tomorrow night, and we were wondering if you would like to come.

JANE: *(Taken aback.)* Me? You're inviting ME to a sleepover? A sleepover where we eat popcorn, braid each other's hair and tell ghost stories around a solitary flashlight?

ANITA: Ghost stories? *(To CANDI.)* This will never work; she's just not cool enough.

CANDI: Don't be silly, she was just joking around.

JANE: I was only joking! You know me, one joke right after another. How long does it take to tune a kazoo? Nobody's bothered to find out. *(Laughs.)*

CANDI: Actually, we don't know you – that's why we're inviting you over.

ALEXIS: We'll be checking you out.

ANITA: Watching every move you make. You know, like when you're at dinner with a guy and you're watching him closely looking for little cues to see if he is really into you or if he really wants to go to the restroom so he can sneak out the back door never to return?

CANDI: You'd better run while you can.

JANE: That's okay, I will be there with open arms. *(She slings her arms out causing her kazoo to drop to the floor.)*

CANDI: *(Picking up the kazoo.)* What's this?

ALEXIS: *(Gasps.)* Is that what I think it is?

JANE: *(Grabs it quickly.)* No! I mean yes! But it isn't mine!

CANDI: Sure it is!

JANE: No, really. I found it on the floor.

CANDI: You found it on the floor, huh? Then you won't mind if I do this. *(She takes the kazoo, crosses to the trash can and pitches it in.)*

JANE: But someone may have lost it. Don't you think we should turn it in to the office?

CANDI: Why should you care?

ALEXIS: Besides, lost and found is for losers!

ANITA: Shut up, Alexis.

CANDI: Now, back to the sleepover. *(GRETCHEN enters.)*

GRETCHEN: Hey, Jane. Ms. Lipman sent me out here to find you. She's not too happy you ran out on kazoo practice that way. *(She exits. The GIRLS turn back to JANE.)*

CANDI: *(Crossing her arms.)* It doesn't belong to you, huh?

ANITA: *(Crossing her arms.)* You found it on the floor, huh? As though it were just lying down there like a doormat. A doormat that gets brutally stepped on by every available guy in this school!

CANDI: Come on, girls, before a paddleball player sees us talking to her. *(They exit flipping their hair.)*

JANE: *(Yelling after them.)* But you don't understand! I'm going to quit! Today!

JANE2: *(Entering and rushing to JANE.)* You let them go!

JANE: *(Sharp.)* Don't talk to me!

JANE2: You were so close and you let them go!

JANE: *(Grabs the kazoo from the trash can and holds it up.)*
Because of this! I'm marching in there right now and telling Ms.
Lipman I'm quitting!

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