

MISS-FORTUNE COOKIE

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Christopher Burruto

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SYNOPSIS: What does it mean to be a friend? And have a best friend? Monica and Blair have been best friends for years, but that friendship is facing its toughest challenge. Blair can't keep a secret, and she's forgotten Monica's birthday. When Monica opens a fortune cookie, it says simply, "Make a wish..." Monica's wish is for Blair to stop speaking. What follows is a tale of friendship, and love, and wishes coming true.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 MEN, 9 WOMEN, 5-18 EITHER, EXTRAS/CHORUS)

MR. HUTCHENS (m/f).....The choir director. *(18 lines)*

MONICA ST. GEORGE (f).....13-16 years old. A little on the quiet side. She doesn't draw attention to herself the way that Blair does.
(250 lines)

BLAIR COOGAN (f).....Her names says it all. She's loud, and self-centered. Monica's best friend.
(172 lines)

SAMANTHA (SAM) (f).....One of Monica's girlfriends. *(38 lines)*

WOOWOO (f).....One of Monica's girlfriends. *(48 lines)*

ANDREA (f).....One of Monica's girlfriends. *(29 lines)*

JASON (m)Monica's crush. *(37 lines)*

RILEY (m).....One of Jason's friends. *(59 lines)*

DEWEY (m)One of Jason's friends. *(3 lines)*

SKIZ (m).....One of Jason’s friends. (5 lines)

TEACHER (m/f).....Mr. G. A teacher—he knows it’s
Monica’s birthday. (3 lines)

DIRECTOR (m/f)Adult teacher. Play director. (10 lines)

MONICA’S MOM (f).....Adult, mid 40’s. (15 lines)

MONICA’S DAD (m)Adult. Mid 40’s. (4 lines)

TONY (m).....A boy who has a definite crush on Blair.
A little awkward and shy. (7 lines)

CABBIE (m/f).....(8 lines)

MARY (f).....The owner of Madam Chang’s Chinese
Rest. She makes the “good fortune
cookies” by hand. (86 lines)

MRS. HAUSER (f)Principal’s secretary. (15 lines)

MR. BING (m/f)The school principal. (42 lines)

MRS. COOGAN (f).....Blair’s mom. (4 lines)

MR. COOGAN (m).....Blair’s dad. (4 lines)

STUDENT CHOIR (m/f).....This could be comprised of the students
in the show or a real choir. (No lines)

STUDENTS (m/f).....Extras. Up to thirteen speaking parts
(STUDENTS 1-8 - - 1 line, STUDENTS
9-10 - - 2 lines, STUDENTS 11-13 - -
1 line)

ACT ONE, SCENE 1

Choir. The curtain is closed. Light illuminates stage front. STUDENTS stand in organized choir rows chatting with one another. MR. HUTCHENS enters and taps on music stand.

HUTCHENS: Let's start at the top, people.

CHOIR:

I WILL RE-MEM-BER
THOUGH THE YEARS ARE LONG
I WILL RE-MEM-BER
WHEN WE SANG THIS SONG.

THESE HALLS WILL REMEMBER
THOUGH WE'VE LONG SINCE GONE
THROUGH THESE EMPTY HALLS
OUR VOICES CARRY ON...

HUTCHENS: Pretty good! The sopranos sounded a little thin - -

STUDENT 1: That's because Blair and Monica aren't here.

HUTCHENS: Again?

MR. HUTCHENS is interrupted by BLAIR and MONICA rushing noisily through curtains. They get into their respective places and are silent.

MONICA: Sorry we're late, Mr. Hutchens.

HUTCHENS: I see you're late, what I would like to know is why you're--

BLAIR: - - Mr. Hutchens, let me tell you - -

HUTCHENS: Blair, we don't have time for - -

BLAIR: *(Ignoring him.)* Monica and I are in the hallway...on our way to your class, of course, and then we see this boy that Monica thinks is kinda cute!

STUDENTS giggle.

MONICA: *(Mortified.)* Blair!

HUTCHENS: Miss Coogan, I really don't - -

BLAIR: He's from California. The one everyone's talking about! He's got the **coolest** hair. **And** he's the ultimate god of tanning! Gor. Geous! Naturally, I had to see what all the fuss was about!

HUTCHENS: Naturally. *(He's lost this battle and settles in to listen.)*

BLAIR: So, add to that, we were a little hungry - -

MONICA: I wasn't!

HUTCHENS: *(Smiling.)* Just went along for the ride, Miss St. George?

BLAIR: We **had** to stop and get something, but the cafeteria wasn't serving. Then we saw Mr. White, our English teacher - -

HUTCHENS: ...Mr. White's involved...

BLAIR: He was coming around the corner, and boom, he crashes into us! His soda bottle - - splat! Hits the ground! Soda shoots up everywhere! Monica and I find ourselves *(Dramatically.)* in the literal crosshairs of a turbulent, spinning tornado of soda - - *(STUDENTS laugh.)*

HUTCHENS: *(Writing it down.)* - - tornado of soda...

BLAIR: - - naturally we had to clean ourselves up - -

HUTCHENS: Naturally...

CHOIR giggles again.

BLAIR: - - We just weren't **choir presentable**, if you know what I mean! We came as soon as we could! Right almost perfectly on time - -

Bell rings.

HUTCHENS: - - for the bell to ring. Thanks, Blair, for that engrossing story. *(He bows slightly.)* I shan't soon forget it.

STUDENTS ready to leave. They stop at his voice.

HUTCHENS: Remember: concert in two days! That's TWO DAYS, people. And...if we are any good, we **might** - - just might - - be invited to participate **for the first time ever** in the State-Wide Choral **Invitational** Concert.

STUDENTS twitter with excitement.

HUTCHENS: That's a big **IF**. We're only good when we **ALL** put forth our best effort. Kapeesh?

STUDENTS: Kapeesh...

HUTCHENS: Special rehearsal after school **TODAY**. And no one will be late, right?

Murmurs from group.

HUTCHENS: That phrase - - no one - - means even you, Blair Coogan. Right? Okay, see you then..

STUDENTS: (*Ad lib.*) See you. Okay, etc.

STUDENT 2: (*To STUDENT 3.*) What a story!

STUDENT 3: (*To BLAIR.*) How do you always seem to get away with stuff?

BLAIR: It's a gift; what can I say?

MONICA: I hate to interrupt but...we've got class; if we're not careful, we'll be late to this one, too. Come on...

BLAIR: Later. I've got to call my dad back... See you...

MONICA: (*Disappointed.*) See you...

STUDENT 4: (*Walking off with MONICA.*) Let me get this straight. Blair's got the choir solo - -

STUDENT 5: - - and she's playing Juliet in the play?

MONICA: Choir solo AND Juliet.

STUDENT 4: How does she do it?

MONICA: Good question. (*STUDENTS depart. Next line aside.*) How does she do it? And **her** Romeo is the very guy I want to be MY Romeo. Jason Henshaw...

She waves at him. He looks, squints, and doesn't wave back. MONICA sighs. SAM, WOOWOO, and ANDREA enter.

SAM: Happy birthday, Monica! (*GIRLS give gift.*) We all chipped in.

MONICA: Oh, guys! I love it! (*Beat.*) Thanks... (*She hugs them.*) Hey!

My mom is dropping off Chinese take-out for lunch!

GIRLS: (*Enthused.*) Love your mom!

MONICA: If she can sneak it past office security!

SAM: Where's Blair? What did she get you?

MONICA: (*Troubled.*) Oh...I don't know.

WOOWOO: Wait a sec; (*Beat.*) did she forget your birthday?

SAM: She forgot your birthday!

ANDREA: She forgot!

SAM: What a...

MONICA: (*Aside.*) Thanks for rubbing it in...my best friend forgot my birthday. Again.

WOOWOO: It's the second year in a row!

GIRLS express sad disbelief.

MONICA: She'll remember. She's been busy, you know, what with Romeo and Juliet, choir...

SAM: I know. (*To GIRLS.*) And being Blair Coogan.

ANDREA: Yeah, she's been too busy looking out for you know who - -

WOOWOO: ...Five dollars says she forgot.

MONICA: (*responding to Andrea's line*) You know who? Who?

SAM: You know!

MONICA: A boy?

WOOWOO: (*Beat.*) No. (*to Monica hoping it hits home*) She's too busy looking out for Blair Coogan.

The GIRLS exit to class.

BLAIR: (*On phone. She enters and crosses by herself.*) Dad. I'm at school. I'm not supposed to talk - -

MR. COOGAN: *(On apron or side of stage.)* Supposed to or don't want to? You have to talk to me sometime, Bair. Even though I'm moving to Chicago, *(or another city about 1500 miles away)* I'm still your father.

BLAIR: I don't care, *(Drawn out with sarcasm.)* D...a...d.

DAD: I want you to be at my wedding. **In** my wedding...I want you there. I need you there. You haven't even said congratulations..

BLAIR: *(Looks at phone, holds it at arms length. Three count.)* I know. *(Hits a button, folds it up and looks at it. She exits.)*

ACT ONE, SCENE 2

Classroom. On stage: two desks, one on either side of the stage. Spotlights alternate between the two. Some STUDENTS are already seated. Some enter.

STUDENT 6: *(Male. Leans over like he's talking to another student.)* You'll love this class. Mr. Romano. Like the cheese. Kind of describes his sense of humor: cheesy.

STUDENT 7: Why is he always so chipper? Come on, Mr. Romano! It's morning. Second period. Give us a break.

STUDENT 8: *(Female.)* I hear that. It takes me until about 8th period to fully wake up.

STUDENT 9: *(Female.)* Mr. Romano! Seriously? Romeo and Juliet? How many times have you read this play? A thousand? News flash: they all die!

STUDENT 10: *(Male.)* Hey, thanks for spoiling it!

STUDENT 9: Come on, every knows the ending. Why bother? It's like that Bruce Willis movie, where he's dead but doesn't know it.

STUDENT 10: What? Oh, great! I suppose you'll tell me that Rocky loses in the first movie too!

STUDENT 11: What's that? No. I don't think I want to read the part of Romeo.

STUDENT 12: Read the part of Juliet? Well, I'm really flattered, but see, Mr. Romano, my voice is used exclusively for - - cheerleading. *(Pause.)* What? *(To AUDIENCE.)* Don't laugh. It's totally legit.

WOOWOO: (to the girls) Here we are again. Jim, Blair, Sam. Jason. Mr. Romano. Shakespeare. The usual suspects. Can't wait until lunchtime. Don't you just hate the idea of wishing away your day just to get to a part of it that you really like?

MONICA: There's Blair.

WOOWOO: Late again! Isn't it funny, Monica, that she can memorize a whole play and remember it for a performance, but has a hard time remembering her best friend's birthday...

BLAIR: Mr. Romano. I'll read Juliet, I am, in case you weren't aware - - playing the part of Juliet in our school's production of "Romeo and Juliet."

STUDENT 11: Ugh... Aren't we done with this play yet? Didn't everyone die already? Huh?

STUDENT 12: (*Female. To MONICA.*) Some girls get all the luck: solo in choir, leads in plays. When is it going to be my turn?

JASON: Sure, Mr. Romano, I'm ready...

MONICA: (*To WOOWOO.*) He might be saying the lines to Blair, but I'm really hoping he's thinking of someone else. Me.

BLAIR: Sorry, Mr. Romano. This text will just take a second. I know you're not supposed to have a cell phone in class. No, I realize that. But it's from my dad!

MONICA: I thought you weren't talking to him?

BLAIR: I'm trying not to. But he texted me... (*To class.*) He and his 30-year-old girlfriend Michelle just moved to (*A city out of state.*). Oh look, someone on Facebook just mentioned **your** love interest, Jason!

MONICA: Blair!

BLAIR: What?

MONICA: Why do you always have to embarrass me?

BLAIR: Monica. Everyone knows! It's not like it's a secret...

MONICA: Maybe some things should be! (*MONICA exits, mad. Blair shrugs shoulders.*)

The bell rings. Lights half down. Desks disappear. In their place are benches.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3

School hallway.

MONICA: *(Sitting on bench. Writing in journal or talking to stuffed animal.)* Some things **are** better left unsaid. That's why they call it a secret. People should have a choice if they want their personal life tweeted and twittered or blogged and texted all over cyberspace. You know?

TEACHER: *(TEACHER walks past, then stops and walks backwards to her.)* Monica St. George! Happy birthday.

MONICA: Thanks, Mr. G. *(Or MRS. G.)* How did you know?

TEACHER: WooWoo told me. Have a good one, okay?

MONICA: I will.

TEACHER: Promise!

MONICA: Pinky promise. Cross my heart.

TEACHER exits.

MONICA: In fourth grade, Blair had a hard time, you know, holding it in. She had a problem.

BLAIR: *(Other side of stage, talking to friends.)* You know, holding it in. One day, we were taking a test.

MONICA: And Blair, nervous anyway about the test, just kind of...you know.

BLAIR: I couldn't hold it. Just couldn't. All over my chair. Dripping down my leg... It was awful. Oh, hi, guys... *(Sees a group of people, begins to socialize.)*

MONICA: So I took her into the girls bathroom. She cried so hard. She was so embarrassed. We went to the gym. I gave her my clothes. I put on my gym clothes. Blair wore my clothes the rest of the day. *(Beat.)* They fit perfectly... Me? I had to wear my dorky gym clothes until I got home. Lately, *(Beat.)* I've begun to wonder...if she would have done the same thing for me... *(MONICA exits.)*

LIGHTS DOWN.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4

School hallway. JASON, RILEY, and several more STUDENTS cross. BLAIR, SAM, ANDREA, MONICA, and WOOWOO stand in small group.

RILEY: Come on, ask her... Just ask her...

JASON: I will. Don't worry. I will.

DEWEY: When?

JASON: When I feel. Comfortable.

RILEY: Did you just say, com - -

SKIZ: *(Slowly, puzzled.)* Comfortable?

JASON: - - comfortable.

RILEY: Comfortable is the feeling when you sink into a chair in your basement, fire up the Xbox 360, and kill some nasty Nazi Zombies! That's comfort, my man.

SKIZ: Comfortable is sleeping until noon on a school day....

JASON: Look, I'm not going to ask her in front of you guys!

SKIZ: If you can't ask out a girl in front of your best buds, something is seriously wrong with you.

RILEY: Seriously wrong...

They laugh.

JASON: I don't get why it's anybody's business but mine. *(Looks at GUYS.)* Asking a girl to the movies isn't a spectator sport, no matter who is egging you on. *(To RILEY.)* Don't worry. When I ask her, you'll be the first to know... *(Break.)* I have liked Monica since, well, for a long time. And it's more than just how she looks...it's the way she laughs. And, the way her eyes light up when she's happy. These guys, well, not all of them would understand. We're doing a school play, Romeo and Juliet... Blair is Juliet. When I'm Romeo, saying my lines, I sometimes find myself looking at Monica. Or thinking about her. Or wishing... *(Sighs.)* You get the picture. *(JASON goes back to the GUYS, and they exit, miming goofing around.)*

WOOWOO: So, Monica? Jason Henshaw... What do you think?

SAM: I think he's perfect for you...the right mix of athlete - -

BLAIR: And student - - I hear he's in mostly honors classes - -

WOOWOO: But he's fun - - and funny - -

MONICA: What about Erika Summers?

ANDREA: He doesn't still like Erika Summers, does he?

BLAIR: According to my sources, that little infatuation was over by the end of last summer. It was *Much Ado About Nothing!*

GIRLS react with wonder at how BLAIR might know all this information.

WOOWOO: How do you - -

BLAIR: The romance had a little flare up in early September, but I think now the time is ripe for Monica St. George to step in!

MONICA: (*Uncomfortable. Laughing.*) Blair! Guys! Come on, lay off!

SAM: The end of the year is soon to be on us, and that means...

WOOWOO: The semi-formal!

BLAIR: Don't you want him to ask you? Huh, don't you?

MONICA: (*Direct to AUDIENCE.*) Where's all this pressure coming from?

BLAIR takes MONICA aside. The other GIRLS exit or mime conversation.

BLAIR: Well, don't you? Don't you want him to ask you? Don't you want to go with him?

MONICA: Well, I...

BLAIR: Come on, you can tell me - - if he doesn't ask you, would you ask him?

MONICA: Promise you won't tell anyone?

BLAIR: Cross my heart and hope to die!

MONICA: I don't know...

BLAIR: If you can't tell your best friend, who CAN you tell?

MONICA: I'm hoping that Jason asks me; But, lately, I've been thinking—maybe I should ask him! I'm just waiting for the right moment...

BLAIR: I knew it! (*Becomes distracted.*) Oh hi, Erika. Oh, wait, isn't today a special day for you? Your 2 1/2 week anniversary with Billy? (*To MONICA.*) I'll just be a second. (*BLAIR goes off with ERIKA SUMMERS.*)

MONICA: What exactly are the qualities of a best friend? The criteria? Is it posted online somewhere? In some book? Because, sometimes? I wonder, I really do.

ACT ONE, SCENE 5

Cafeteria. STUDENTS holding trays, lunches. One table. Other STUDENTS mill round it with trays and lunches. A teacher prowls.

WOOWOO: Love your mom!

ANDREA: God I love Mrs. St. George! Monica, your mom has brought us Chinese food for your birthday every year without fail!

SAM: Oh, the Moo Goo Gai Pan! My favorite.

ANDREA: Of course! It's Madame Chang's! It's the best!

WOOWOO: This is the most perfect food in all the world!

MONICA: It's become quite a tradition around here. The birthday girl's mom brings in lunch for our table. WooWoo's mom brings in Italian from Carestio's Italiana.

WOOWOO: The meatballs are, frankly, exquisite.

ANDREA: My mom brings in some nice subs from Toreo's Deli.

SAM: Gwen makes - - my mom - - makes homemade pizza with veggies - - homegrown - - and low sodium - - you know, she's one of **those** moms...I think she still has her tie-dyed shirt from the original Woodstock...

MONICA: And my mom? Every year? A huge spread from (*All the GIRLS chime in.*) Madam Chang's Good Fortune Cookie!

SAM: Ugh. I never thought I'd say this, but I'm stuffed.

MONICA: Me too.

BLAIR: Not me, I remain undeterred as always.

WOOWOO: (*Stands.*) Ladies. You know what time it is, right?

GIRLS: Fortune!

WOOWOO: Fortune cookies. Madame Chang's are too delicious, and it's the only place that makes their own!

SAM: The best!

WOOWOO: (*Stands.*) To Monica St. George! Happy birthday!

ALL: Happy Birthday!

BLAIR: Birthday? (*It's finally sinking in that she forgot Monica's birthday*)

They break open their fortune cookies.

ANDREA: Okay, listen. Here's mine: (*Dramatically. Fun.*) "Silence is the great teacher, and to learn its lessons you must listen..."

WOOWOO: Here's mine: "By listening, one will learn truths."

SAM: What does yours say, Monica?

GIRLS: (*Ad lib.*) Yeah, what does yours say? (*They encourage her to crack it open.*)

WOOWOO: Well?

SAM: What's it say?

MONICA: (*MONICA looks puzzled.*) It's blank. (*Girls react.*)

ANDREA: Turn it over!

MONICA: (*To AUDIENCE.*) It's really faint. It looks like it's written... by hand..."As you wish."

SAM: What's that supposed to mean?

MONICA: Leave it to me, on my birthday, to get a fortune cookie without a complete fortune.

JASON and boys walk past. MONICA bows head and shyly looks away. JASON breaks off and approaches MONICA.

JASON: Monica...do you have a second? There's something... (*Lamely.*) something I'd like to ask you. I'd like to...ask something. You...

MONICA: (*Looks over at girls who give her the thumbs up.*) Sure.

JASON: Uh...would you mind?...Going over...? I thought we could go over here, if you don't mind... (*JASON crosses.*)

ANDREA: Here it is!

SAM: (*Takes MONICA's arm.*) Say yes! Whatever - - just say yes!

They go together to down left while the rest of the GIRLS and GUYS remain at table miming eating and other conversation.

JASON: Uh, I was wondering if...if...

MONICA: - - Yes. Sure. I'd be happy to...

JASON: *(A little surprised at the quickness with which she answered.)* You would? Great...maybe...we could meet tomorrow, after school...

MONICA: Tomorrow? I thought it was in two weeks.

JASON: Well, the math final **is** in two weeks, but I thought if we could start studying **now**, I might do better - -

MONICA: *(Deflated.)* Oh, you...want me to help tutor you for the math final...

JASON: Yeah, I...what did you think I was...

MONICA: *(Covers her mistake.)* Math! Of course!

JASON: If you're to busy, I'll totally understand.

MONICA: No. I'm fine...tomorrow is perfect.

JASON: *(Smiles.)* Thanks, Monica... See you tomorrow...

MONICA: *(Nods and waves. Aside. Deflated.)* Say "yes". Ugh. Math tutor? I'm an idiot. An idiot! Oh, and happy birthday to you Monica...you loser.

MONICA returns to table. The boys are on edge of stage.

DEWEY: *(To JASON.)* Did you ask her? Huh?

BOYS: *(Chiming in.)* To the dance? Did you ask her?

JASON: *(Shakes head.)* I lost my nerve...

RILEY: You what?

SKIZ: Lost your nerve?

RILEY: What happened to all those lessons I gave you? All that relationship counseling? All for nothing!

SKIZ: If you didn't ask her to the dance what **did** you talk about?

JASON: *(Embarrassed.)* I asked her if...she would tutor me in math.

DEWEY: *(Places hand on shoulder.)* I think I speak for all of us when I say - - **you're an idiot.**

JASON: I know...I know... *(They exit dejected.)*

Lights up on GIRLS still at table.

WOOWOO: So...? Did he ask you something?

MONICA is silent. Five count.

ANDREA: Or better yet - - did **YOU** ask **HIM** to the dance? Huh? Did he say yes?

MONICA: *(Increasingly angry. As she speaks, the other GIRLS lose enthusiasm.)* Look at my face. *(Points.)* Does it LOOK like I'm going to the dance with him? And *(Pause.)* who gave you the idea that I was going to ask him? Huh? *(Turns to BLAIR.)* I told **one person! One!**

GIRLS look to BLAIR, giving away who told.

MONICA: Blair! How could you? That conversation was confidential!

BLAIR: Come on, it's cute. You would've told them anyway - -

MONICA: But I **didn't** tell **everyone**, BLAIR! I told **you**. You promised you wouldn't say **ANYTHING**.

BLAIR: I don't think I ever promised that, Monica.

MONICA: Of course you did.

BLAIR: It doesn't sound like anything that I would promise - -

The bell rings. STUDENTS leave. Aware of the argument, they tiptoe around the GIRLS.

BLAIR: So you didn't ask him...I thought so. You don't have any nerve.

MONICA: That's not the point! The point is, **Blair**, if you want to know the point, is that you TOLD.

BLAIR: He said no, didn't he! You're never going to get anywhere in life if you don't take risks...

MONICA: *(Beat. Almost under her breath.)* Shut up!

BLAIR: What?

MONICA: *(Stands up and faces BLAIR.)* In case you didn't hear me, I'll say it louder! Shut up! *(She's almost in her face now, fed up.)* "I wish you'd shut. Up."

A gong sound issues and resonates. MONICA reacts to it, a little bewildered, yet no one else hears it. BLAIR folds her arms and storms out.

SAM: *(Approaching MONICA.)* Wow. You really blasted her!

WOOWOO: She had it coming.

ANDREA: She can never keep a secret. She's a 24/7 blab fest!

MONICA: She didn't even remember it was my birthday! She told a secret...

ANDREA: Come on, we've got play rehearsal.

School bell sounds.

ACT ONE, SCENE 6

Play rehearsal on stage.

DIRECTOR: Okay, here we are, everyone. Hey, where is my Romeo?

RILEY: Isn't it wherefore art thou Romeo?

DIRECTOR: Very humorous, Mr. Riley. Ah, there you are. Jason Henshaw. *(Sarcastically.)* Thank you for showing up on time for our rehearsal. And where is our Juliet? Late as usual?

STUDENT 13: *(Female.)* Here she is...

Blair walks by MONICA with scarcely a look.

DIRECTOR: Why don't we begin with Juliet. Say, scene - - ? - - Right? Right. Okay, Blair, let it rip.

BLAIR opens her mouth, but no sound emerges.

DIRECTOR: Blair Coogan. See, the trick to theater, is for the audience to HEAR you, that's why they come to the performance. They want to hear...

BLAIR shrugs, expressing "I don't know what's going on."

STUDENT 14: Maybe she's saving her voice for cheerleading...

The STUDENTS laugh.

DIRECTOR: Miss Coogan. Are you going to speak today? Or are you on some kind of *(Beat.)* actor's strike?

ANDREA: *(To MONICA.)* I don't know, the silence is almost refreshing.

DIRECTOR: Do you have laryngitis?

BLAIR shrugs, unable to explain.

SAM: Blair, what's wrong? Why can't you speak?

BLAIR turns to MONICA, she shrugs again.

MONICA: You're mad. At me. Is that it?

BLAIR shrugs YES, then NO. She shrugs again, hands in air.

DIRECTOR: Blair, we can't wait forever. *(Sighs.)* Who's your understudy? *(She shrugs.)* Right, you can't tell me. Your voice is on strike.

MONICA: *(Raising her hand.)* I am, Mr. Drake. *(BLAIR is angry.)*

DIRECTOR: Alright. Let's get started?

MONICA reads lines as lights go down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 7

Stage. LIGHTS UP.

DIRECTOR: Okay, everyone, good job. I hope you're ready for our performance - - T minus 3 days and counting. And Blair Coogan, I hope your voice and your attitude join hands in happy communion by then. (*Turns to MONICA.*) Monica St. George. Good job. Impressive. (*Everyone claps.*) You did a fine job today as Juliet.

MONICA: Thanks, Mr. Drake. (*She exits with her friends.*)

DIRECTOR: Everyone. Rehearsal tomorrow. Same Shakes time, same Shakes Channel...

Students groan and ad lib confusion at his remark.)

BLAIR sits on a bench, fuming, tapping her foot. STUDENTS exit. MONICA has left a purse behind. She returns.

MONICA: I forgot my... Your still here?

BLAIR: Uoogh... (*Blowing out a lot of air.*)

MONICA: What happened to you today. Your voice?

BLAIR: (*Shrugs.*) I don't...know - - My voice! It's back!

MONICA: It's back? What happened?

BLAIR: Nothing came out. I could feel it inside here, (*Touches throat.*) but it died before it came out.

MONICA: I guess you're better now.

BLAIR: (*A little accusatory.*) It's kind of an eerie coincidence, isn't it - -

A student -- TONY -- enters. BLAIR is silenced.

TONY: (*Nervous. Awkward.*) Oh hey, Monica. Blair. Uh...did you see a backpack lying around? I lost my glasses, and I think they're in my backpack...

MONICA: Tony. They're (*Points to head.*) up there. On your head.

TONY: *(Checks. Deflated. Embarrassed.)* Oh, yeah! Funny, the last place you look is the first place they are. *(Bows.)* Thank you, ladies, and see you. Later. *(Trips or stumbles as he exits.)*

BLAIR: It happened again!

MONICA: What?

BLAIR: I couldn't talk.

MONICA: You're talking fine now!

BLAIR: Yeah, but as soon as Tony - - *(TONY re-enters.)*

TONY: Ummm - - Sorry. Keys? Have you seen a set of--*(BLAIR just glares. MONICA looks from one to the other.)* Sorry. You're busy. I'll back away now. Slowly. Out the door. Oh, here they are...in my pocket... See you... Sorry.

BLAIR: Monica... What's going on? Why can't I talk?

MONICA: You're talking now, though.

BLAIR: Yeah, now, but earlier, at rehearsal. And now when Tony - - *(TONY re-enters.)*

TONY: *(More awkward and inarticulate.)* Sorry. But Monica. Hey, I heard it's your birthday. Happy birthday. And all that congratulatory. Stuff. Congratulations. Oh hi, Blair. You did a nice solo. In choir. When we were all singing. Together. *(Beat.)* Bye. *(He exits.)*

BLAIR: Did you do something to me? Put a curse on me? Or some kind of magic jealousy spell?

MONICA: *(Beat.)* Jealousy spell? You think I'm...

BLAIR: Jealous.

MONICA: Of you?

BLAIR: Of me. Who else? Monica, really...

MONICA: *(Bewildered.)* What are you talking about? Jealous.

BLAIR: Oh, come on, this is your way of getting back at me for forgetting your birthday!

MONICA: I **knew** you forgot it! You didn't forget Erika Summers' two and a half week anniversary, though, did you?

BLAIR: And telling the girls about your crush on Jason - - is like announcing that the sky is blue! Like the whole school doesn't know about your crush. It's not a secret! Even the teachers know!

MONICA: What? Teachers?

BLAIR: It's obvious. Who am I? (*In a swooning, lovesick voice.*) Hi. Jason... (*She waves in imitation of MONICA.*) Oh, and isn't it such a coincidence that my understudy, who just so happens to be **you**, got the chance to play Juliet! On your birthday! My God, Monica, what did you say to Mr. Drake, huh?

MONICA: What? That's crazy. I didn't say - -

BLAIR: (*Imitating MONICA.*) - - Mr. Drake...today's my birthday, and **jeeppers**, it would be so **great** if I could just - - this one time - - be Juliet and creep out from behind Blair's shadow - -

MONICA: Shadow? I can't believe just how...how self-centered...you are!

BLAIR: (*Doesn't hear MONICA.*) And another thing - - if it were me, I wouldn't give Jason Henshaw the time - -

MONICA: SHUT UP!

BLAIR mimes that she can't speak. She puts her hands to her throat.

MONICA: Speak...

BLAIR: (*Slowly.*) - - of day... What did you--? (*Horried in a comic way.*)

MONICA: Shut up!

BLAIR is silent.

MONICA: Speak.

BLAIR: - - just do? Put a spell on me? Monica! Stop doing that!

MONICA: Say something else.

BLAIR: Something else.

MONICA: Say a poem!

BLAIR: Roses are red

Violets are blue

I am pretty and

So are - -

MONICA does clam hands.

BLAIR is silent.

MONICA: Wow. *(She looks at her hand.)* The hand works. *(She undoes it.)*

BLAIR: "You"... What have you done to me?

BLAIR'S cell phone rings. She checks the caller.

BLAIR: It's my mom... *(She opens it up and can't speak.)*

MONICA's MOTHER enters.

MOM: *(A little peeved.)* Monica St. George. I know it's your birthday, honey, but I've been waiting in that parking lot for twenty minutes. Hello, Blair, honey, how are you?

BLAIR mimes a greeting.

MOM: Something wrong, Blair?

MONICA: Uh...Blair has a touch of... *(BLAIR mimes her throat - - like she can't talk.)*

MOM: Heimlich maneuver? Choking? Sore throat? I don't get it.

MONICA: Laryngitis.

MOM: Oh. Had it. Usually goes away after a day or two. Though a teacher friend of mine had it for a couple of weeks, and one of her vocal cords froze. It never sounded the same again. *(GIRLS exchange terrified looks.)* She sounded like Kermit the Frog. All the time. At first, a little cute; after awhile, not so much. We're meeting the rest of the family for dinner, Blair, why don't you join us?

MONICA: No! *(BLAIR mimes "No.")*

MOM: Huh?

MONICA: She's got to rest her vocal cords! And you know how *(Laughs.)* how much fun you guys all are. She'll be laughing all the time. And that's like the worst thing for your vocal cords. And stuff.

MOM: *(Beat.)* I don't believe you. *(Beat.)* We're not that much fun... *(To BLAIR.)* Can we at least give you a ride home? Good. Monica, why don't you call Mrs. Coogan... I'll be out in the car.

BLAIR and MONICA nod.

BLAIR: Monica! As soon as you get home, call me!

They exit just as TONY re-enters.

TONY: *(At a loss.)* I know I forgot something, but I'm not sure what it oh, well...

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