

THE OXY-MORONS

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS

By Christopher Burruto

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SYNOPSIS: Everyone hangs out in the school lobby between classes. It's the place to see and be seen. Jason Henshaw and his friends: Dewey, Skiz, and Riley have sat at the same spot since sixth grade - even through the chicken nugget scandal and the eighth grade coup d' état. When a group of girls (including his on-again-off-again crush, Monica) lay claim to the spot, trouble ensues. They decide to have a contest: who can pull off the best practical joke, with the winner claiming the spot for the rest of the year.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(APPROXIMATELY 10 MEN AND 9 WOMEN -
8-9 EITHER GENDER, EXTRAS)

Note: Add as many students and teachers as you wish.

JASON HENSHAW (m)..... Middle or high school age.
Jason is the main character of the play. He has a crush on Monica, but he is too shy and too awkward to really do anything about it. His best friends are Riley, Dewey and Skiz. He values their friendship a great deal, perhaps a little too much. Jason should wear typical school clothes: a gold shirt, jeans or khaki pants.
(127 lines)

JASON'S MOM (f) A typical, understanding adult parent. (39 lines)

- JASON'S DAD** (m)..... Adult parent. Let's Jason make decisions for himself that he knows are wrong, but will help him mature. Should dress as an adult. (36 lines)
- ALEXIS** (f) Middle or high school age. Jason's twin sister. She is annoyed with the immaturity of Jason's friends, but has a soft and compassionate side that Jason relies on. (36 lines)
- CLEAVON** (m)..... Middle or high school age. A bully and the leader of the Disciples of Doom. (12 lines)
- SCAB** (m)..... Middle or high school age. A member of the Disciples of Doom. (3 lines)
- AXL** (m) Middle or high school age. A member of the Disciples of Doom. (Non-speaking role)
- WALLACE** (m)..... Middle or high school age. A "nerd" character. Should dress age appropriate with an emphasis on nerd. (4 lines)
- ANDREA** (f) Middle or high school age. Monica's best friend. She and Riley are very similar, and while they are arch enemies, there is still a kindling of attraction. (39 lines)

SARA (f).....	Middle or high school age. One of Monica's friends. <i>(18 lines)</i>
SAM (f).....	Middle or high school age. One of Monica's friends. <i>(13 lines)</i>
MONICA (f)	Middle or high school age. Jason's crush. She is strong, smart, and her own person. <i>(64 lines)</i>
RILEY (m)	Middle or high school age. Jason's best friend, foil to Andrea. The comic centerpiece. He is also the group's ringleader. <i>(99 lines)</i>
DEWEY (m).....	Middle or high school age. One of Jason's friends. <i>(82 lines)</i>
SKIZ (m)	Middle or high school age. One of Jason's friends. <i>(66 lines)</i>
MR. SHEPARD (m)	Adult teacher, about 45. Typical coach with a whistle and clipboard, gym sweats, etc. <i>(7 lines)</i>
MRS. CRUMP (f).....	Adult teacher, 25-45. The kind of teacher that kids will talk to about virtually anything. <i>(33 lines)</i>

- ERIKA SUMMERS** (f) Middle or high school age. The most beautiful girl in school, and she knows it. She is saving her voice for cheerleading, so she doesn't read out loud. Ever.
(5 lines)
- MRS. HAUSER** (f) The omniscient and ever-present secretary. What she doesn't know isn't worth knowing. (25 lines)
- MR. OR MRS. HART** (m/f) There's more to Principal Hart than meets the eye. He's busy and hurried, but he is patient and has a sense of humor.
(29 lines)
- 2-3 EXTRA TEACHERS** (m/f) Adult teachers. Should dress age-and-position-appropriate.
(13 lines)
- 2-3 EXTRA STUDENTS** (m/f) (12 lines)
- USHER** (m/f) Middle or high school age. S/he should be dressed in some kind of uniform, or shirt and tie. Could double as Emcee.
(4 lines)
- EMCEE** (m/f) Middle or high school age. A student or faculty member who emcees the talent show. Could double as Usher. (1 line)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Jason's bedroom and Monica's bedroom can be simple set pieces that are no more than a chair and a cot. They are on opposite sides of the stage. Decorate as you would an average students' room.

The hallway scenes can be constructed using one or more flats with lockers painted on them. Two benches on either side or downstage are for Jason and his friends to lay claim to. One locker should open to accommodate Wallace. You may decide that instead of shutting Wallace into a locker, he just gives himself a wedgie.

Hart's office can simply be a few chairs in front of the main curtain and a desk stage left. Mrs. Hauser's desk is stage right.

Classroom scenes can be suggested with a single desk and chairs instead of several desks. The school hallway scene can be removed or turned so that it is unobtrusive.

The movie theater scene can take place in front of the main curtain. A line of people and perhaps a roped off area is sufficient to suggest the scene.

The dungeon hallway scene is just across the closed curtain.

The school talent show can be staged either in front of the main curtain, or the school hallway scene can be removed or modified.

During the scene where Riley and Andrea cross talk, it's helpful to have lights fade in and out as they speak.

PROPERTY LIST

- ☐ Cheerleading outfit and pom poms for Jason
- ☐ Phone for Monica
- ☐ Phone for Jason
- ☐ Bikes for Riley and Skiz
- ☐ Pie tins and whipped cream for pies
- ☐ Snacks for boys

- Light sabers/swords and safe red food coloring for blood, plus an extra shirt or two
- Lantern for the dungeon hallway scene
- A dummy used for health class, or any almost life-size stuffed animal
- Clipboard and whistle for Coach Shepard
- Candy jar for Mrs. Hauser
- Phone with buttons for Mrs. Hauser
- Velvet rope to indicate movie theater line
- Walkie talkies for teachers during talent show
- Skirts for Riley, Dewey and Skiz

SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

ACT ONE, SCENE 1	JASON'S BEDROOM
ACT ONE, SCENE 2	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT ONE, SCENE 3	CLASSROOM
ACT ONE, SCENE 4	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT ONE, SCENE 5	PRINCIPAL HART'S OFFICE
ACT ONE, SCENE 6	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT ONE, SCENE 7	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT TWO, SCENE 8	JASON'S BEDROOM/MONICA'S ROOM
ACT TWO, SCENE 9	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT TWO, SCENE 10	MOVIE THEATER
ACT TWO, SCENE 11	HART'S OFFICE
ACT TWO, SCENE 12	JASON'S BEDROOM
ACT TWO, SCENE 13	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT TWO, SCENE 14	HART'S OFFICE
ACT TWO, SCENE 15	SCHOOL HALLWAY
ACT TWO, SCENE 16	THE TALENT SHOW
ACT TWO, SCENE 17	THE TALENT SHOW
ACT TWO, SCENE 18	JASON'S BEDROOM
ACT TWO, SCENE 19	SCHOOL HALLWAY

AUTHOR NOTES

This play hits close to home as it is the most autobiographical play I've written. My best friends today are those I met in middle school. While we didn't pull quite as many pranks as in the play, we certainly pulled our fair share. We had a principal named Mr. Valentine - hence Hart - who was stern, but had a good sense of humor, enough of a sense of humor to hire me even when I parked in his parking spot before the interview! We were also close to our school's secretary. What they don't know isn't worth knowing is all-too-true. They act as confidant, friend and counselor rolled into one. The group, the "Oxy-Morons," actually existed. They were a group of boys and girls who were equally smart and irreverent. And, there is precedence for a boy wearing a skirt to school. Several years ago, a student of mine decided to wear one on the last day of school. This is the same student who represented our state in the National Spelling Bee. My good friend Burt had a great Hot Wheels pencil that was broken by a bully and he never forgot it, and we never fail to remind him. So, as both student and teacher, this play resonates with me in many, many ways.

ACT ONE, SCENE 1
JASON'S BEDROOM

Front half of the stage. Curtain opens, lights rise. Jason models a skirt in front of a mirror with his back to the audience. Lights continue to rise as he fixes his hair and tries to make himself more presentable.

JASON: What am I doing? I'll never live this down!

MOM: *(From offstage.)* Jason! What's taking you so long? The bus will be here any minute!

Jason, panicked, leaps into bed just as Mom enters.

MOM: *(Continuing.)* What is it Jason? You're NOT still in bed are you? Sick? *(Feels forehead.)*

JASON: *(Aside.)* I wish . . .

MOM: *(Bustles around.)* No fever. Big test today?

JASON: No, I'm just a little . . . you know . . .

MOM: Oh I get it. It's a Monday, is that it? You've got five minutes to get your groove on . . . that bus . . .

JASON: I'm uh, not taking the bus today. I'm going to walk with the guys . . .

MOM: Sounds nice, but let's get it going, okay? *(Exits.)*

Jason gets out of bed, continues to primp a little. Looks at himself, paces.

ALEXIS: *(Enters.)* Jason, have you seen my . . . cheerleading . . .

JASON: Don't you ever knock?

ALEXIS: And miss this? Wow! That is some attractive look!

JASON: Don't . . . say . . . a . . . word . . .

ALEXIS: Sometimes, words aren't necessary. Like now. *(She sits on the edge of his bed and opens a pretend journal.)* Let's see, how will this appear in my journal? "Today, my twin brother Jason Henshaw gives in to *(Pause.)* certain mysterious impulses . . ." This isn't another one of those stupid stunts you and your friends pull, is it?

JASON: Shh . . . Come on Alexis . . .

ALEXIS: All you guys do is complain that girls don't pay attention to you - here's the irony - they'll pay attention now. Not the kind you're looking for, though, is it?

JASON: Would you mind just -

ALEXIS: - message to twin brother: girls . . . don't find **this** attractive.

JASON: - just give me a break, will ya?

ALEXIS: Is this something to do with the talent show? And Monica?
(*Showing some concern.*)

MOM: (*Enters unannounced.*) JASON! (*Jason and Alexis wait for Mom to notice the dress. Instead, she notices his hair.*) What's with your hair? Don't you ever use a comb? Hmmm? (*She kind of fiddles with it.*)

JASON: (*Brushing her off.*) Mom!

MOM: Okay, fine! (*She drops off the laundry basket then exits.*)

ALEXIS: (*Waiting.*) Three . . . two . . . one.

MOM: (*Screams from offstage. Reenters and stares at disbelief at Jason. She can hardly get the words out.*) You're wearing a dress!

ALEXIS: Blast off . . .

JASON: I know. I'm the one who put it on.

MOM: Is this something for school? A presentation? A play? Is someone blackmailing you?

JASON: Mom. Just let me . . .

MOM: Did **Riley** put you up to this? (*Calling "off stage" to husband.*) David? Honey? We need you in Jason's room!

DAD: (*Enters tying a tie.*) Hey, won't the bus be here soon . . . Whoah! You're a cheerleader! Since when are you a cheerleader? Alexis, isn't this yours? Are you going to school wearing...(*Beat*) Did **Riley** put you up to this?

ALEXIS: Let me summarize: He knows he's wearing a cheerleading outfit. He knows it isn't flattering. And no, Riley didn't put him up to this. (*To Jason.*) At least you could have asked me before you took my outfit. Now, it's got nerd germs on it. And how are you fitting into that?

JASON: Not well . . . trust me.

DAD: (*Looks around. Then to Mom.*) You're okay with this?

MOM: No, I'm not okay with it, but (*Tries to be modern, caring and politically correct.*) Jason, if this is what you **want**, if this is who you **are**, we'll work through it . . . **together**, as a family . . .

DAD: Jason, did you bump your head and forget what guys wear to school? *(To Alexis.)* Is this part of some weird makeover project?

ALEXIS: No! He's wearing it despite how it looks!

JASON: *(Pleading.)* Look! I know what I'm doing! I'm in full control of my faculties! Trust me!

DAD: *(Sits down.)* I see . . .

MOM: Here it is . . . The conversation no parent is prepared for.
(Beat.) We need Dr. Phil!

DAD: Will this dress violate the dress code or something? Ha. Dress code . . . get it? *(Censoring self)* No! No time for jokes. *(He frowns and sits on bed again, moaning.)*

MOM: This is serious, David.

ALEXIS: It's bad enough that we're twins and had to share the same womb, now he wants to share our closets . . . if you're wearing my underwear *(Beat.)* you're one dead mister, mister.

MOM: Jason. Are you wearing your sister's underwear?

JASON: No!

DAD: Jason. Son. What's this all about? Huh?

JASON: It's a long story -

DAD: *(Looks at watch. Does scale of justice thing.)* Okay. Big sales meeting at nine - my future with the company, or my son, wearing dress to school. Speak. This should be interesting . . .

MOM: I'll say.

ALEXIS: I agree. This should be **very** interesting. *(Sits down on bed with a look of expectation on her face.)*

MOM: What do you think **YOU'RE** doing, young lady. *(To Jason.)*
I'm talking to Alexis, here honey, not you . . .

JASON: *(Irritated. Beat.)* I know!

MOM: *(To Alexis.)* Your bus will be here soon.

ALEXIS: I'm not going **anywhere**!

DAD: Oh, yes you are. Out that door. Down the stairs. On that bus.
To school.

ALEXIS: *(Stands.)* Look. When Dweebie over here goes to school, he's not the only one with Henshaw as a last name. I'll be wearing that dress too. Metaphorically speaking. My reputation will be gone. Wiped out. I have a right to hear the story. Because after today, I'll have to live in a cave for the rest of my life.

DAD: *(Beat)* She's right . . .

MOM: *(Pause.)* Jason. The story. NOW!

DAD: The whole thing. All of it. Fast.

JASON: Okay. But, it's not a fast kind of thing. It may take a while.

MOM: We're sitting here until we hear the whole thing.

JASON: *(Takes a deep breath.)* Okay. Here goes. It starts with the Oxy-Morons.

DAD: What morons? That family down the street?

JASON: No, no. It's a kind of a club. With Dewey, Riley, Skiz. We call ourselves The Oxy-Morons.

MOM: The Oxy-Morons is the name of your club? Why couldn't you name yourselves The Lettermen, or . . .

DAD: - or "The guys who get good grades because they do their homework club"?

JASON: Are you kidding me? The Good Grades Club?

ALEXIS: Remember, Dewey is part of this club . . .

MOM/DAD: *(Beat)* Right . . .

JASON: You guys weren't very cool as teenagers were you?

DAD: Oh, and dressing up as a cheerleader? This is cool?

ALEXIS: Dad, trust me. The Oxy-Morons is the perfect name for Jason and his friends - there's a collective lack of oxygen getting to the top floor - *(Points to head.)* it's what makes them morons!

MOM: At least you're not the Disciples of Doom.

JASON: Just let me tell my story, okay? It begins at school . . .

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 2 SCHOOL HALLWAY

Students and teachers cross. Wallace at locker. Disciples of Doom enter. Their leader is Cleavon. Monica and friends are at their lockers or lingering in the hallway.

Students murmur in fear and awe. To make the most of this, try casting the smallest Disciple of Doom as Cleavon.

CLEAVON: *(Approaching.)* Wallace, Wallace, Wallace.

WALLACE: *(Frightened.)* Uh? Cleavon, Cleavon, Cleavon?

CLEAVON: Have a good weekend?

WALLACE: *(Gulps nervously.)* Sort of. You?

CLEAVON: Not bad. Thanks for asking.

WALLACE: *(Nervous.)* Mr. Cleavon sir? *(Clears throat.)* Do you always have to shut me in my locker on Mondays. Can't you give me a reprieve?

SCAB: Hey, he uses words with lots of syll - syll - he uses big words.

CLEAVON: Wallace, my friend, I am disinclined to acquiesce to your request . . .

DISCIPLES: Huh?

CLEAVON: - if you're asking me to defer a day before I begin my usual practice of fear and intimidation, you're looking in the wrong place. Plus, you're my 9:30 appointment, if I let you go, I'm behind for the rest of the day. I've got a very tight schedule to maintain . . .

MONICA: You know guys, someday soon, Wallace is going to get big!

SAM: Tall and strong! Bigger than you. *(Wallace is trying hard to stifle the girls who are totally fabricating the story.)*

ANDREA: Like his older brother, James - *(Quizzical faces.)* who is now playing offensive tackle for . . . Penn State.

SARA: *(Slowly, dramatically, intimidating.)* Six feet five inches tall, arms the size of *(Searching for word.)* well, the size of a small planet!

ANDREA: And! He was way smaller than Wallace was at this age!

MONICA: I really hope Wallace forgets all this bullying and intimidation.

CLEAVON: *(Nodding, but unaffected.)* I hear what you're saying. *(Pause.)* But until then, it's best to make good use of the time we have left.

WALLACE: Jeez. I'll do it myself. *(He shuts himself in the locker.)*
(Focus shifts to another part of the stage where Jason and friends have been hanging out watching.)

JASON: Wow. That Cleavon is something else.

SKIZ: I heard he started shaving in the sixth grade!

DEWEY: Yeah, now his five o'clock shadow has a five o'clock shadow. *(The boys rub their chins, absent-mindedly looking for stubble.)*

RILEY: Well, fellow Morons, I call this meeting of The Oxy-morons to order!

DEWEY: I'll order two eggs over easy. A side of hash browns and -

RILEY: It's time for a role call!

BOYS: *(On a three-count.)* ROLE!

RILEY: *(Checking off everything on a clipboard.)* Okay . . . "Riley"?
(Pause.) Oh, that's me. Here. Skiz?

SKIZ: Present!

RILEY: Jason?

JASON: Here!

RILEY: And finally, the Dewster, the Deweynator, the big fuzz.

DEWEY: Present!

RILEY: Who's got the food?

DEWEY: Let us now honor these chips, chips who will shortly sacrifice their lives for our gastronomical enjoyment. *(Reaches into his backpack and pulls out three or four bags of chips, soda, etc.)*

ALEXIS: *(Walking by with Andrea and some other girls who stop and stare.)* Oh, look! It's feeding time at the zoo! Ladies and gentlemen, for your own safety, keep your hands and feet away from the animals! *(Alexis shakes her head and continues on with the group.)*

SKIZ: You know Jason, Alexis . . . she's kind of - you know . . . cute . . . *(Jason gives him a look.)*

DEWEY: Yeah! I know what you mean. *(Jason gives him a look.)* I mean *(Clears throat.)* she would be cute, if she weren't your sister, and luckily, you're not identical twins, because, well, that would be kind of weird. I'll stop talking now . . .

JASON: Identical? Twins? What's wrong with you?

RILEY: Nothing a lobotomy couldn't cure. Oh, wait. That would be redundant.

SKIZ: Deja vu all over again.

JASON: More like deja food! *(They go back to eating.)*

DEWEY: These chips are piquant. Yet, crunchy!

RILEY: Insouciant. With a naughty, unbridled flavor!

SKIZ: Tangy, but amusingly tart! *(They all look at Dewey to add his two cents, but his hand is in the bag, and his mouth is full.)*

DEWEY: Mscbgaifen!

RILEY: The purpose of this meeting is to firm up a commitment we made at our last meeting. To pull a stunt.

ALL: Ah, a S - T - U - N - T!

SKIZ: (*Counts off on his fingers.*) A silly, trivial, unprovoked, nuisance tactic. A stunt!

RILEY: Gentlemen. Let me remind all of you why it is that we do these stunts, eh?

SKIZ: Look around you. What do you see?

RILEY: Kids. Mindlessly following rules. Our job -

DEWEY: - as we see it

SKIZ: - is to bend the rules

DEWEY: Push the envelope

RILEY: Keep things from becoming too boring.

SKIZ: Expose the multitude to the banality of their own empty, existential existence. (*Everyone looks at him. He shrugs.*) I read it somewhere. I was looking for the right opening. (*Beat.*)

JASON: So, without us -

SKIZ: - the place would be as lifeless as Mars . . .

RILEY: As the moons of Saturn . . .

DEWEY: As Jason's love life.

JASON: (*Sarcastically.*) Thanks . . .

RILEY: I've got a couple of ideas. Let's conference. (*The boys go upstage to "talk."*)

The girls: Monica, Sam, Sara, and Lindsay walk downstage as a group. A group of well-dressed, "Abercrombie" girls stand or sit on benches.

MONICA: Did you ever notice how . . . how school is a microcosm of social order?

SARA: Uh-oh. Here she goes again! With another one of her *relevant* social observations . . .

MONICA: No, really, Sara. Look at that group of people over there. They stand there every day like they own the place.

LINDSAY: That's because they're the popular girls.

MONICA: You practically need a passport just to go near there.

SARA: And if you don't fit in, you're excommunicated.

Just then, one of those girls walks by, Erika Summers, the best looking, most popular girl in school. Every boy on the stage stops what he is doing, comes downstage, and watches her. They form a line ogling her.

SKIZ: (*Lovesick.*) Did you see?

ALL GUYS: (*Lovesick.*) Yeah . . .

RILEY: (*Lovesick.*) I mean, she is so . . .

GUYS: (*All guys.*) Uh-huh.

DEWEY: (*Lovesick.*) Have you ever seen a girl so . . .

GUYS: (*All guys, lovesick.*) No . . . (*All guys sigh as one.*)

Bell rings and everyone exits except Disciples of Doom.

SHEPARD: (*Into walkie-talkie.*) This is Shepard, over. I've got dawdlers in the lobby. Repeat, dawdlers in the lobby. (*To Disciples.*) Is there a problem here? (*He's ignored.*) It's time you went to class . . .

CLEAVON: Class? First, we're going to roam the halls. (*Vocal agreement.*)

SCAB: Then, we're going to write on the bathroom walls!

SKIZ: Then, maybe, pull the fire alarm!

CRASH: Later, if we're in the mood, we'll start a food fight in the cafeteria!

CLEAVON: We've got a full agenda! Tell me, is there something **you're** going to do about it?

SHEPARD: (*Gulps.*) Here's a couple bucks so you'll leave me in peace . . .

Lights down.

ACT ONE, SCENE 3
A CLASSROOM

Desk and chairs. A teacher, Mrs. Crump, sits at a desk correcting papers. Monica enters after about a five count.

MONICA: *(Enters and sits down in a huff.)* Ugh . . .

Mrs. Crump doesn't react.

MONICA: Ugh? *(She hopes Mrs. Crump is paying attention.)*

CRUMP: *(Taking both parts of the conversation.)* "Why, hello, Mrs. Crump. Beautiful day, isn't it?" "Oh, hello Monica, yes, it certainly is, how are you today?"

MONICA: *(Laughs.)* Sorry. Hi Mrs. Crump, how are you!

CRUMP: Something on your mind, Monica?

MONICA: Boys.

CRUMP: I see.

MONICA: Sometimes, they're just so . . . I just don't understand them at all . . .

CRUMP: *(She gives up what she's doing.)* So your study of animal behavior is not yielding any true insight into the species, is that it? You're frustrated?

MONICA: Isn't every woman? Boys defy logic! They can't decide whether to play with GI Joe's or . . . or particle accelerators! How did they end up in charge of the world?

CRUMP: Honey, they just **think** they're in charge - that's what we **want** them to think. *(Pause.)* You know, Monica, there's a secret to boys.

MONICA: A secret? What is it?

CRUMP: The secret is: boys are boys. They're not adults. They're not children. They're caught in the nether world between child and adult.

MONICA: Like in hibernation? A pupa stage or something?

CRUMP: Exactly. And one day, they'll wake up, smell the coffee and fall all over themselves to get your attention. Don't blame them too much, they're not quite awake yet. *(Pause.)* This wouldn't be about one boy in particular would it? Jason? Henshaw?

MONICA: How did? . . . It's not really Jason so much as -

CRUMP: His friends?

MONICA: Yeah. Individually, they're great. As a group? Trouble. Especially Riley.

CRUMP: Monica, sometimes a boy will do what he does because of his friends. Sometimes a person has to act in spite of friends. Act based on their hearts. Like, in the play we're reading -

MONICA: - *Romeo and Juliet*. (Laughs.) I get the feeling you're going to show me a parallel here somewhere . . .

CRUMP: Juliet is a strong and independent woman. You two are a lot alike. She follows her heart, and doesn't let her family or friends decide her fate, especially when it comes to true love . . .

Jason enters. Sees what's going on, spins around, and goes out the door.

MONICA: See?

CRUMP: Right . . .

JASON: (Enters again. This time combing his hair and shyly sitting down in a chair. Weakly.) Hi. Hi. Monica. Hello, Mrs. Crump. I guess I'm a little early.

CRUMP: That's okay!

JASON: Are we reading *Romeo and Juliet* today?

MONICA/CRUMP: Yes . . .

Skiz and Dewey enter, they sit down next to each other and eye each other. They go near Jason and bring him down stage.

SKIZ: (To Jason.) Are you ready?

JASON: I don't know . . . guys, I was thinking . . .

DEWEY: (Mockingly disgusted.) What is this? A last-minute cowardly backing out?

SKIZ: I knew this would happen. It's because SHE'S (Referring to Monica.) in here, isn't it?

DEWEY: Old lady Crump? (Slowly.) or is it . . . young lady Monica?

JASON: (Uncomfortable, in denial.) Huh? I don't know what you're talking about!

SKIZ: He doesn't want to be seen with his buds. Embarrassed to do a STUNT. Might not look "appropriate."

JASON: All right. All right. I'm in. I guess.

DEWEY: *(Begins slowly, ends up making a huge speech that everyone ends up watching in awe.)* You guess? Did Washington GUESS he was right when he crossed the great Mississippi? Did Einstein guess he was right when he invented Everlution? How about when my **dad** invented **Casual Friday**? No, my friend, not only is this right, but in the annals of Fairfield Junior High School, this will go down as one of the most rightest things ever done!

CRUMP: Dewey? Isn't this the wrong period for you to be in my English class?

DEWEY: *(To the boys.)* Foiled! *(Very sweetly to Mrs. Crump.)* Every period should be English class when you love it as much as I do, Mrs. Crump.

CRUMP: See you next period, Dewey!

DEWEY: *(To boys.)* I'll see you later. Bon chance, mon ami *(He kisses Jason on the cheek like in the French Foreign Legion.)*

CRUMP: How appropriate. We are also doing a little drama today. We're reading the scene between Mercutio and Benvolio . . . The scene where they die!

BOYS: *(Knowingly.)* Really???

CRUMP: Now, who would like to read today? Erika? We haven't heard you read in a while.

ERIKA: Mrs. Crump? *(Stands.)* I don't think you really understand. *(Pause.)* I don't read. Out loud. Ever. Every teacher I've ever had knows this. Accepts this. My voice is purely for *(Pause.)* cheerleading. Also, I just dropped my pencil; I wonder if anyone could pick it up for me . . .

All of the boys dive to pick it up. It's quite a commotion.

MONICA: Oh, brother. *(The boys settle back in their seats after one was successful in returning the pencil to Erika. Jason and Skiz raise their hands.)*

CRUMP: Yes, boys?

SKIZ: If it's okay with you, Mrs. Crump, Jason and I would be . . . honored . . . to read today . . .

CRUMP: Why, thank you. Skiz, I believe this is the first time in my memory that you have actually raised your hand! Usually, you just blurt out everything that's on your mind!

SKIZ: Thanks Mrs. Crump.

CRUMP: Let's begin . . .

SKIZ: *(Clears throat, waggles shoulder like he's getting into character.)* "Oh, calm, dishonorable, vile submission! Jason, you rat catcher, will thou walk? *(They take out Star Wars light sabres and pummel one another.)*

JASON: What wouldn't thou have me?

SKIZ: Good king of Cats, nothing but one of your nine lives. That should make us bold withal. Will you pluck your sword out of his pilcher by the ears? Make haste, lest mine be about your ears . . .

JASON: I am for you!

CRUMP: Uh, boys?

SKIZ: Come, sir, your passado. *(They fight.)*

JASON: Draw, beat down their weapons!

CRUMP: Gentlemen, for shame forbear this outrage. Jason, Skiz, put down thy weapons . . .

SKIZ: *(Ignoring her.)* I am hurt. A plague o' both your houses. I am sped. I am gone, and have nothing.

JASON: Take that you poor miserable retch, to your doom.

SKIZ: *(Coughs up blood. Actors have a bottle of colored water which they spit out and spray on themselves.)* You sir, a cheap shot. A lucky stab. This is nought but a scratch, a mere trifle. Here! Have a taste of your own medicine. *(He thrusts sword under Jason's arm who then also spits blood.)*

JASON: My liver! It will grow back no thanks to that bully thrust. You sir are an insult to all who walk on two legs. *(They continue to thrust and parry until they are exhausted and spitting up blood.)*

Students assemble around them, then look at Crump who has a disgusted look on her face.

SKIZ: Who . . . are you?

JASON: I am your father young Skywalker! *(They fall down in a heap, dead.)*

STUDENT: Are they? Dead?

SAM: No. Unfortunately.

CRUMP: I have never, in my life, seen such . . . I don't . . . have . . . words, fail me . . .

SKIZ: (*Rises.*) Wow. Without speech. High complements indeed. Methinks we did a great job, home slice! The day we brought Shakespeare to life! We were excellent!

JASON: Like Deniro!

SKIZ: Like Hoffman!

JASON: Like Sir Lawrence.

TOGETHER: Olivier!

SAM: More like Abbot and -

GIRLS: Costello!

CRUMP: (*Barely containing her anger.*) Hart!

SKIZ: The principal?

JASON: He can act?

SKIZ: He acts like a person every day!

JASON: I did not know that.

CRUMP: (*Angry.*) Get thee to Mr. Hart's office! Out! Now! Faster than now! (*The boys gather themselves together and begin to exit.*)

SKIZ: Boy, I can't believe we get sent to the office for performing Shakespeare.

CRUMP: It's a stretch to call that monstrosity Shakespeare.

ACT ONE, SCENE 4 THE "DUNGEON" HALLWAY

Small forward stage in front of curtain the stage is dark. Dewey holds a lantern and a sign that says "Sixth Grade Tours."

DEWEY: Step lively now children. Don't dawdle. My name is Dewey and I'll be your tour guide today, showing you the rarely seen underbelly of Fairfield Junior (*Or senior.*) High. It's not every sixth grader who gets such an opportunity.

STUDENT 1: It's dark.

STUDENT 2: And scary.

STUDENT 3: I miss my mommy!

STUDENTS: Me too! (*General murmurs of agreement.*)

STUDENT 1: You sure, Mr. Dewey sir, that we'll be safe?

DEWEY: Just a little detour. Nothing to worry about. *(He gets out a compass and checks it.)* Don't be frightened children, according to my compass -

STUDENT 2: - your compass. It's broken.

DEWEY: What?

STUDENT 2: It doesn't have a needle.

DEWEY: Oh. Well. No problem. I've been down here a gazillion times. Watch out for the pylons, the tubas, and chairs . . .

STUDENT 3: Sir? Mr. Dewey, sir? I'm scared . . . of all the pylons,

STUDENT 2: And tubas.

STUDENT 1: And chairs.

DEWEY: Oh, my!

STUDENT 3: Pylons -

STUDENT 2: And tubas . . .

STUDENT 1: And chairs . . .

STUDENTS: Oh, my!

DEWEY: WAIT! . . . *(Points to resuscitation doll.)* Look! Look over there! *(Beat. Whispers hauntingly.)* I see dead people!

Kids scream and huddle behind Dewey.

STUDENTS: *(Ad-lib.)* I want to go home! I want my mommy!

DEWEY: Wait, wait, wait . . . she's not dead . . . she's ALIVE!

Students scream.

DEWEY: *(Wrestling with doll.)* Help! She's a cannibal! The undead . . . holy water, a tape of the Jonas Brothers *(Or other popular or current group.)* She's AHHHH. She's trying to eat me! Do something! *(He rolls off her and shoots her with his finger.)*

Kids run off stage opposite screaming nearly running into Mr. Shepard who enters from that side. The lights go full on.

SHEPARD: Dewey! What do you think you're doing taking that expensive resuscitation doll out of health class, young man? I hope she's not damaged!

DEWEY: My guess is, and it's one embedded in the light of experience . . . Mr. Hart's office . . . do I need a pass or anything?

SHEPARD: (*Shakes head.*) No!

DEWEY: (*Mock poetic to Mr. Shepard.*) Mr. Shepard . . . If I don't come back, and not everyone who makes this journey does, remember me fondly . . . if you . . . hear the wind sighing in the trees, know that I am there, if you see a butterfly dancing among the flowers, know that I am -

SHEPARD: Can it Dewey! Go to the office!

DEWEY: Do you want anything while I'm down there? Office supplies? Coffee? Frappicino? Mmm. They're tasty!

SHEPARD: (*Shakes head no.*) No! But, maybe while **you're** down there, you should get **yourself** (*Beat.*) a little self-respect!

DEWEY: Noted. I can do that! (*Exits. Mr. Shepard just shakes head.*)

Lights down.

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