

SCHOOL PORTRAIT MONOLOGUES

A COMEDY IN ONE ACT

By Don Tongue

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SYNOPSIS: It's time again for the annual high school yearbook portrait, and drama queen, Gina Garfoni, is dreading a repeat of the previous year's photo catastrophe. Last year's photo was so bad that there's even a blog devoted to it! This year, the photographer is experiencing some problems, and while waiting for him to adjust his equipment, Stacey, Gina, Tank, and Will unburden themselves in front of the camera. Through confessional-type monologues, this comedy puts the trivial issues of high school into perspective.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 MEN, 1 WOMAN, 2 EITHER)

- GINA (f) An energetic high school student, drama queen, who craves being the center of attention, even when the attention is less than flattering. (57 lines)
- WILL (m)..... Despite having suffered some personal tragedies that have left his family nearly destitute, Will is a mature, good-natured high school student who does what he has to do to get by and is seldom noticed by other students. (54 lines)
- TANK (m)..... A self absorbed high school student, jock, quarterback of the football team, who is burdened with affluence and classic good looks. (14 lines)
- STACEY (m/f)..... An academic overachiever, socially awkward, high school student, geek who attends Ivy League math camps in the summer. (7 lines)
- PHOTOGRAPHER (m/f) Unassuming adult school portrait photographer. (23 lines)

SCENES

Scene 1: Prelude to a School Portrait

Scene 2A: Portrait One - - The Geek (Stacey)

Scene 2B: Portrait Two - - The Jock (Tank)

Scene 2C: Portrait Three - - The Drama Queen (Gina)

Scene 2D: Portrait Four (Will)

Scene 3: Postlude to a School Portrait

SETTING

Scenes 1 and 3 take place in a high school hallway.

Scene 2 takes place in a classroom being used to take student photos. The photographer is off to one side in the shadows. The students are center stage facing the audience in a tight full body spot.

SCENE 1
PRELUDE TO A SCHOOL PORTRAIT

Lights up. WILL, GINA and TANK are waiting in the hall to get their school portraits taken. GINA is pacing nervously, animated as though engaged in an internal conversation.

WILL: *(Clears throat, to GINA.)* Hey, what's the . . .

GINA: *(Desperately.)* How do I look?

WILL: You look, uh, well, you know, fi . . .

GINA: Oh. This is the worst. I've gotta get a better photo than I did last year or . . . or . . . or I don't know. I suppose I could always join a monastery. I could live a life of quiet solitude . . . I think. *(Quiet beat.)* Oh, who am I kidding. I'm doomed. *(To WILL.)* Fi? *(RHYMES with "I.")*

WILL: What?

GINA: When I asked you how I looked, you said, "You look fi." Fi, what's fi?

WILL: I was just going to say you look . . . fine.

GINA: Fine? You think I just look - - fine? Is that the look you think I'm going for? Fine? This is the school photo; the picture that is going to be in the school yearbook for everyone to see and you think I want to hear, "You look fine." I couldn't believe that photographer last year. He just sat there and didn't say a thing. I mean, how could he not see it? My hair was totally wiggled out. Unbelievable. It was THE worst. He probably thought I looked . . . fine. Oh my god. Does anybody have a mirror? *(Frantically searches through her purse, flinging items in all directions.)*

WILL tries to catch the stuff GINA is flinging from her purse and picks up items that fall on the floor.

GINA: *(Continues.)* Ooooooh, doesn't anybody carry a mirror? *(To WILL.)* Do you think I have time to go to the bathroom?

WILL: Yeah. Sure. It . . .

WILL tries to slip the items he's collected back into GINA's purse while she continues to rant.

GINA: *(Doesn't notice WILL slipping items back into her purse until the last item, a hairbrush.)* No. There's not enough time. They'll call us in any moment now. It's always the same. They make you wait and wait and wait and . . . and . . .

TANK: Wait?

GINA: Yeah! And just when you think you're about to explode, they finally call you in. It's like waiting to be executed or something. They take you in, line you up, say - - SMILE - - then BAM - - right between the eyes. You don't even know what hit you until you get the prints back and see the horror with your own eyes. *(Catches WILL trying to slip the hairbrush back into her purse.)* Is that mine?

WILL: Oh, uh, yeah . . .

GINA: WHAT are you doing with my hairbrush?

WILL: I was just . . .

GINA: Give me that. *(Snatches hairbrush from WILL.)* Creep. *(Attacks her hair with the hairbrush.)*

WILL: I think you need to calm down a bit. You know . . . just . . . chill out.

TANK: Huh, you can say that again.

GINA: Calm down? Chill? Out? Excuse me, but did you SEE my photo in the yearbook last year? What am I saying. Of course you did. Everybody did. How could you miss it. All you had to do was come within ten feet of the thing and you could hear it screaming out like some demon possessed book of spells. Wicked Witch! Wicked Witch! Run Away! They should have put a big fat warning label on the cover. Beware! Gruesome Photo Inside!

WILL: Come on. It couldn't have been that bad.

TANK: Yeah, right, not bad - - if you're from a family of trolls.

GINA: *(To WILL.)* You didn't see it?

WILL: . . . uh . . .

GINA: Exactly what planet ARE you from?

WILL: I don't recall . . . I mean the picture. I don't recall seeing . . .

GINA: Don't recall? Are you kidding me?

WILL: I guess I didn't look that closely. I mean they're just pages and pages of photos and after a while they kind of all look the same.

GINA: All the same? No. No. Okay. I get it. You're just trying to punk me - - right? Ha ha. You think this is real funny.

WILL: No. Really. I didn't see it.

GINA: (*Pretends to be looking for something. Sarcastically.*) Hmm, let me see.

WILL: What? What is it? What are you looking for?

GINA: Let's see. It's gotta be around here some place. Hmm.

WILL: What? What's gotta be around . . .

GINA: (*Stares directly into WILL's face.*) The rock you just crawled out from under!

TANK: Ha. Good one.

WILL: (*Annoyed.*) OKAY! You're right. I did see it. I think I even lost my lunch over it. Okay? You happy now?

TANK: Ooo, snap. Gotcha, Gina.

GINA: Tank. Why don't you and your beloved bicep thingies find something to do and give your poor brain a rest. (*Beat, to WILL.*) . . . you really didn't see it - - did you.

WILL: (*Shrug.*) . . . no.

GINA: Wow. That's amazing.

WILL: . . . so . . . so what happened?

GINA: What?

WILL: I mean, why did it turn out so awful . . . your . . . pic?

GINA: This isn't going end up on the Hair-zilla Blog is it?

WILL: Hair-zilla what?

GINA: Oh my god! You seriously haven't seen the Hair-zilla Blog? Hair-zilla dot com? No, I guess you wouldn't, since you seem to be the only person in the known universe not to know about my hideous picture. Someone actually created an entire blog devoted to my photo. They even have a contest for people to submit their own pics to see if they can find one worse than mine. So far, no winners. I think they're up to over a thousand, and believe it or not, none of them even come close to . . .

WILL: So what happened?

GINA: Just between you and me?

WILL: Sure.

GINA: Well, I guess you could say I was simply the victim of horrible timing. My picture was scheduled right after gym class, and we had been outside doing some physical activity or something, god only knows, anyway, we didn't hear the warning bell, and the teacher finally looked at her watch and realized we were late. I barely had time to change, and well, I had washed my hair before school, and I guess it was a little dried out and it was cold that morning, I had gym first period, and my hair got totally frizzed out - - I mean we are talking major fur ball - - and - - well - - I went and got my picture taken and the rest is . . . is . . . \(\textit{Sniff.}\) is having to live with the shame and humiliation for the rest of MY LIIIIIFE! WAH!

TANK: Oh jeez.

WILL: Hey. Uh. It's okay. Don't worry.

GINA: It's not fair. It wasn't my fault. That stupid stupid gym class.

WILL: It's no big deal. It's just a silly photo. Who cares. So what if someone created a blog that gets thousands of hits a day.

GINA: WAAAAAH!

WILL: Big deal! It's not like the universe is going to explode over one bad picture. Anyway, I . . . uh . . . I think you're actually kind of cute.

TANK: (*Mocking.*) Ooh. I think you're kind of cute.

GINA: (*To WILL.*) You do?

TANK: Oh brother.

WILL: Yeah. At least when your eyes aren't all red and puffy from crying.

GINA: Oh my god!

TANK: (*Admiringly, to WILL.*) Smooth. Real smooth, kid.

GINA: You're right!

TANK: The old sucker punch.

WILL: No, I didn't mean it like that.

GINA: I can see it now. Face-zilla dot coooom! Waaah! (*SOB! SOB! Sudden composure.*) No. Keep cool. Must stay in control. Can't look like I've been CRYING! WAAAAAH! WAAH! (*SOB . . .*)

WILL: Uh. Okay. Uh. I'll. Uh. Wait right here. (*Exits quickly, returns with a roll of toilet paper.*) I got this from the bathroom. Here.

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WILL holds the roll while GINA takes the end of the toilet paper and starts pulling it off in one continuous stream, blowing her nose, crying, pulling more off, blowing her nose, crying, etc. TANK moves even further away as WILL looks around slightly embarrassed.

GINA: *(One last little nose blow.)* Thank you.

WILL: Sure.

Pause.

GINA: OOOOOH! What's taking them so long?

WILL: I, uh, don't know. *(Beat.)* I'm Will, by the way.

GINA: Oh, hi. I'm Gina.

WILL: *(To self.)* I know.

GINA: What?

WILL: What?

GINA: Did you say something?

WILL: Oh, no.

GINA: Will. I like that name. Will.

WILL: Thanks. Of course, it's short for William. I like Will instead of Bill . . . Billy or even Willie . . .

GINA: ARRRG! What is taking them SO long?

WILL: I don't know. Maybe the camera broke.

GINA: Yeah, I wish. I think that geeky kid - - Stacey? Yeah, Stacey Stewart. He was the last one to go in. Maybe he broke the camera. Goopy Stewy. Yuck.

WILL: He's alright.

GINA: You're not a member of the computer or AV club are you?

WILL: No.

GINA: Good. Those guys just creep me out with their pocket protectors and calculator wristwatches and . . .

PHOTOGRAPHER: *(O.S.)* Next.

GINA: Oh my god!

TANK exits. BLACKOUT.

SCENE 2A
PORTRAIT ONE - - THE GEEK (STACEY)

Lights up. PHOTOGRAPHER to one side in shadows. STACEY stands center stage in tight full body spot.

STACEY: *(Fidgets.)* Hello?

PHOTOGRAPHER: Hello.

Pause.

STACEY: So . . . What's up?

PHOTOGRAPHER: What?

STACEY: Yeah, like, what's going on? Are we going to do this thing or what? I'm missing my favorite class.

PHOTOGRAPHER: I'm sorry, I just need to make a few adjustments.

STACEY: *(Fidgets anxiously, beat.)* I've done a little photography. Mostly digital. For a scout project I set up a darkroom to develop my own photos. It was pretty cool how the images appeared as you put them through the different chemicals. It's like a chemical reaction, which is really cool. That's another of my favorite classes - - chemistry. Yeah, besides math, I think chemistry is definitely in my top five. I guess I like science in general - - except biology. I mean, it's OK, but it gets kinda messy with the bugs and plants, and of course, the dissections. Formaldehyde makes me nauseous. Physics is cool. Like, to think, your light is hitting me at 186,000 miles per second. Well, actually 186,282.397 miles per second or 299,792,458 meters per second. And it's like, WOW! Could you imagine traveling at 186,000 miles per second? It would be like - - amazing. And it's a good thing light waves aren't solid. I mean, if they were totally solid and hitting us at 186,000 miles per second we would be totally blown away. Do you need some help?

PHOTOGRAPHER: What?

STACEY: With your adjustments. Do you need some help?

PHOTOGRAPHER: Oh, yeah. I mean, NO. I think I've got it. Thanks.

Pause.

STACEY: I know what you're thinking - - what a geek. I know it's not popular, but I just like learning stuff. The "cool" kids just don't get it. They can't understand why someone would spend their summer at math camp. They spend their vacation at the pool or the beach, hanging out, talking about stuff like clothes and cars, sports, movies. I've been to three Ivy League summer camps for advanced math studies. We're talking - - Advanced Math. This stuff is light years beyond your Pythagorean Theorem stuff. I've been to one at Princeton; two at Cornell. I was on the waiting list to attend the MIT advanced theorem boot camp. They only take ten students a year for a six-week program that explores the solutions to the most advanced mathematical problems ever solved by some of the most brilliant minds. It's totally awesome.

GINA: (O.S.) WAAAAH!

STACEY: (*Chortle.*) That sounds like Gina Garfoni. Her picture didn't go so well last year. It was a real horror show. (*Beat. Confidentially.*) Nobody knows this, but I created the Hair-zilla blog. It has been amazingly popular, and the postings have been, like, crazy! It makes a pack of rabid dogs look like a litter of kittens. Talk about feeding frenzy. I don't make any posts. I just manage the site. I mean, it wasn't even my idea. Someone asked me to do it. I can't say who. It was kind of a grudge thing, you know? Anyway . . . I guess, when you stop to think about it, it is kinda cruel.

PHOTOGRAPHER: Okay, I'm ready now. Smile.

Camera flashes, spot tightens to just the shoulders and head like a portrait. STACEY's portrait tableau, chagrined smile. BLACKOUT.

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