



PENELOPE GOT SAVED...NOW WHAT?

A Christian Youth Comedy

By Mike Anderson

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This play is available for use free of charge under the Creative Commons CC BY-ND license, the key element being that Jesus Christ is our Lord and Savior, and that only through His grace can we be saved.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact us at actsninefive@gmail.com.

***Lastly, any feedback would be appreciated and will be used to help with the development of future projects.
May God bless you and yours,***

Mike A

Synopsis

What's a girl to do? Penelope was never one to sit around and let everyone else do all the work, and that was back when she still thought the most important things in life were shoes and cheerleading. Now, two whole weeks after accepting Jesus as her Savior, everywhere she looks she sees her classmates wandering around oblivious to the fact that their very souls are in danger. What's worse, the few Christians that are around don't seem to be doing anything about it. Penelope is at her wits end and on the verge of giving up when she sees her opportunity in the unlikely circumstances of a battle between the jocks and the geeks. There are only two weeks left before the end of the school year but Penelope is determined that goodness and right will prevail, even if she has to single handedly drag everyone to salvation kicking and screaming along the way.

CAST

The Jocks:

ALEX – Quarterback. He's not a bad kid down deep, he's just caught up in the whole "local sports hero" thing. He's the leader of the Jocks and the most popular boy in school.

VINNIE/THE JET – Wide Receiver. He has a HUGE ego which really just masks an even bigger insecurity issue. He's always running his mouth and likes to lord it over everyone who's "not cool". He is also very anti-religion.

WALTER – Running Back, overall a pretty good guy, class clown. He’s a Christian, but hides it well.

HAROLD/TRUNK – Left Guard. Before becoming a football starter he was the third member of the geek squad, then known as Goon.

The Geeks:

SAM – Long time Christian. He’s mad at God because his dad, who is a Marine Chaplain, is always deployed. Sam is very quick witted and sure of himself; at this point in his life he just wants to be left alone, he’s not looking for trouble but he won’t back down either.

LARRY/ZIPIT – Very extroverted, He always says whatever comes into his head. He is almost as smart as he thinks he is, and isn’t shy about letting people know it. He runs his mouth constantly, which tends to annoy everyone, even his best friend DARRELL.

DARRELL/SPAZ – Very introverted, has incredible math and science skills. He can seem pretty normal until put on the spot...which means...talking to girls, confronted/teased by classmates, called on to answer in class, etc...at which point he begins to make weird gulping and stuttering sounds and his eyes kind of twitch and get very big and blinky.

NORMAN/LOON – Beyond shy, he never talks. He got his nickname from Walter because he reminded him of a “Loony Tunes” character.

The Cheerleaders:

PENELOPE – Captain of the Cheerleader Squad. She only recently accepted Jesus and is now overwhelmed with the need to “do something” about it, while her life just seems to be settling back into the same old rut. She is very smart, very pretty and just a ball of enthusiasm.

RITA – Cheerleader. She’s been Penelope’s best friend since grade school. She has a very strong personality and is quite outspoken. She also tends to lean toward “new age” spirituality and doesn’t understand Penelope’s new “obsession” with being a Christian.

MISTY – Cheerleader. She’s very sweet and quiet. She’s also a Christian but tends to be a little worldly in her outlook.

The Faculty:

MS. CHADWICK – Lincoln High School Teacher. She is very competent but equally unorganized. She loves teaching and truly cares about her students.

ACT I

SCENE 1: WHAT NOW GOD?

(SETTING: Center Stage, spotlight comes up on PENELOPE. She is wearing a bathrobe and brushing her teeth. She pauses, frowns, after a short time she looks up to pray.)

PENELOPE

What now, God...I'm not sure what to do?

(Pause.)

Things are supposed to be different now, aren't they? I mean what's the point of being a Christian if everything I do is the same as before I became one? You can't have saved me just to be Captain of the Cheerleading Team.

(She pauses again, sounds exasperated.)

I'm sorry, God, but if You want me to do something, I'm afraid You're just going to have to rub my nose in it to get my attention.

(Starts brushing her teeth again.)

(The lights go down for a double beat.)

(SETTING: Classroom in darkness. The spotlight comes up and follows SAM. He starts walking toward the door which is blocked by ALEX, VINNIE, WALTER and TRUNK.)

ALEX

(Steps in front of SAM to block his exit.)

Hey smart guy, where do you think you're going?

SAM

(Beat, calmly.)

To lunch.

ALEX

Probably not a good idea...I doubt you're going to feel like eating solid food once we get done with you.

SAM

Hey, I don't know what your problem is, but I don't have time for this. Just step aside and let me by.

ALEX

Really! You just made me get an "F" on the history test and you don't see a problem with that?

SAM

Hey, maybe if you studied a little bit you wouldn't have to try to cheat off of someone else.

ALEX

Yeah...well here's what I think about that!

(SFX: Slow Motion (SM) begins (NOTE: during SM the lights flicker momentarily at the beginning and end while classical music plays quietly in the background (Bach - Double Violin Concerto in D Minor) and the actors all move in slow motion with somewhat exaggerated movements).

ALEX balls up his right fist and throws a haymaker at SAM'S head. SAM waits until ALEX'S fist is right in front of his face then leans his head just out of the way and lets ALEX'S momentum carry him past and out of SAM'S way. SAM then gives ALEX a shove with his elbow, sending ALEX stumbling away. SAM finally steps by and disappears out the door. The other jocks watch in slow motion amazement, looking from ALEX throwing the punch to SAM escaping. SFX: SM Ends (lights flicker again as music stops)).

ALEX

(Catches himself, whirls around and rushes to door. He leans out, looking for, but obviously not seeing SAM.)

WALTER

(Surprised look and tone.)

Whoa...that was wild!

ALEX

(Calling out to the hallway.)

Yeah, you better run...but you can't hide!

VINNIE

(Sounding superior.)

Dude, just let it go, that geek ain't worth your time.

ALEX

(Whirls around, sticks a finger in VINNIE'S face.)

Oh really? Because of that geek I'm now failing this class! Do you realize that will make me ineligible for football! How many touchdown passes do you think you're going to catch with Arnold Gimble throwing you the ball?

VINNIE

(Looks worried, then laughs.)

That ain't gonna happen.

(Hooks a thumb at his chest.)

Take it from *the Jet*, there's no way coach is going to let his All-State Quarterback get benched because he flubbed some silly quiz.

ALEX

(Reaches over and taps his knuckles on VINNIE'S head.)
Hellooooo...we're not talking about just one test here, Mister Wizard. The *State Eligibility Requirements* say I have to maintain a passing grade in all core courses...like W-O-R-L-D H-I-S-T-O-R-Y!

(Pauses for effect.)

There's nothing Coach can do about that! And you're not going to tell Coach, or anyone else about this...you hear me? I'm not going to have him rubbing my nose in the fact that I'm an idiot!

(All the Jocks have worried looks as they exit through the door.)

(The spotlight goes down and comes back up on Penelope on the far side of the stage.)

PENELOPE

(Wide eyed, mouth hanging open. Silently mouths...)
Rub my nose in it!

(Mimes rubbing her nose and looks up. Silently mouths...)
Thank You!

(The spotlight goes down and back up on the Geeks at center stage.)

LARRY

(Looks pointedly from DARRELL to NORMAN.)
Did you see that!?

DARRELL

See what?

NORMAN

(Confused look, shrugs shoulders.)

LARRY

Are you kidding me?! We just witnessed a major evolutionary event *and you missed it!*?

DARRELL

(Rolls eyes.)

NORMAN

(Looks more confused.)

LARRY

Seriously, you didn't see this...?

(Makes a fist, then, with exaggerated slow motion with vocal sound effects, throws it at his own face, watches it coming toward himself cross-eyed then leans his head out of the way at the last instant and lets his hand go by.)
...geek beats jock at his own game. It's an unprecedented event; amino acids become DNA, goo becomes protoplasm, fish walks on dry land...*GEEK BECOMES SUPER GEEK!*
(Raises his hands victoriously overhead.)

DARRELL

You're talking about Alex missing when he tried to punch the Sam kid?

LARRY

That's just it! Alex didn't *miss!*

(Really starts to get fired up.)

Alexander Jurgensen...Alexander the Great...*never* misses. He can't, it's not in his genes!

DARRELL

(Skeptical look.)

LARRY

Remember last week when he had his goons hold you up by your ankles and he was rapid fire slapping you...bam...bam...bam...

(Slaps DARRELL three times in concert with his words.)

DARRELL

(Jerks back and glares at LARRY.)

Yeah, I remember!

LARRY

Right, but did you realize he hit you one hundred and seventeen times *without-a-single-misfire*? And given the way you were squirming around...

(Wiggles his head, arms and upper body around wildly.)
...well, let's just say the odds of that happening are beyond incalculable!

DARRELL

You counted them!?

LARRY

I had to. What kind of a scientist would I be if I let that kind of empirical data slip by me.

(Waggles a finger at DARRELL.)

Besides, a couple pats on the face are a small price to pay for proving my Jocks versus Geeks theory.

DARRELL

One hundred seventeen is hardly a couple...and I almost lost a molar!

LARRY

(Give a "whatever" shrug.)

If you wanna make a nuke...you've got to crack a few atoms.

(Gets a faraway look.)

But this kid Sam puts a whole new light on things...a true geek with super jock reflexes...is it possible?

(Gets a diabolical smile.)

I believe we just might have to run a little experiment to find out?

*(LARRY and NORMAN exchange worried looks.
The lights go down.)*

END OF SCENE

SCENE 2: The New Kid

*(SETTING: MS. CHADWICK'S Classroom.
Several STUDENTS are on stage, talking, studying or working. SAM is near his desk looking at a picture of Abraham Lincoln hanging on the wall. HAROLD is the only jock in the room, sitting quietly at his desk. The three GEEKS are huddled over a chess board. LARRY is also obviously watching SAM.
ENTER: PENELOPE, who comes in, looks around and notices SAM. She studies SAM, gets a calculating look, starts forward, but stops for a silent prayer.
ENTER: RITA (wearing her cheerleader uniform), she storms in, sees PENELOPE, frowns and marches over to join her.)*

RITA

P-E-N-E-L-O-P-E...wake up!

PENELOPE

*(Startled, opens eyes, turns and looks at RITA.)
Uh...sorry, Rita, I just needed a moment...*

RITA

We don't have a moment! What we do have is an entirely new routine to learn before Friday's pep rally, remember?

(Beat.)

You don't even have your uniform on yet!

PENELOPE

I know. But after what happened this morning...

(Points at SAM.)

I wanted to tell the new boy, Sam, that I'm praying for him.

RITA

Penelope, you're my best friend and I love you like a sister. But, girl, you're losing it. Did you just hear yourself? Not to mention you were just standing here, right out in front of everyone...*praying*, like you're some kind of priest or nun or something. You've got to snap out of this and get back to reality...*right now!*

PENELOPE

Rita, I don't know what to say. I...I thought you understood. This isn't some fad I'm going through. Being a Christian isn't something I'm *doing*...it's who I am now.

(Beat.)

I've changed, Rita. If people think that's weird then so be it. I'm not going back to being the girl who's whole life was centered on cheerleading and hanging out at the mall.

RITA

Well, I guess that means my life is pretty much a waste of time too, huh?

PENELOPE

What? No! I wasn't talking about you. You're a wonderful person.

RITA

Sure...in a plastic, superficial way.

PENELOPE

Stop it! I was talking about *me*, not you.

RITA

Well I've got news for you, Penelope, since we've been all but conjoined twins since the first grade, if you're talking about *you*, then you're pretty much talking about *me* too. Only now, *you're*...

(Holds up hands and makes "quotation" sign with her fingers.)

..."reborn", while I'm still just pathetic old me.

(ENTER: MISTY (wearing cheerleader uniform), she hurries in to join PENELOPE and RITA.)

MISTY

(Cheerful but rushed.)

Hey ladies, lunch is almost over, the bell's going to ring any minute. I thought we were going to meet in the gym?

RITA

So did I, but Penelope needed to take a few minutes to let me know just how messed up my life is.

MISTY

(Taken aback, looks from one girl to the next.)

Rita, I'm sure Penelope didn't mean to say anything bad about you. Isn't that right, Pen?

RITA

And by the way, she thinks you're a total loser too!

MISTY

Meee...what did I do?!

PENELOPE

Nothing! No one did anything but me. I was just trying to explain how I feel about being a Christian to Rita, but of course I messed it up and she took it the wrong way.

MISTY

(Reassured but still uncertain.)

Oh, okay.

(Addresses RITA.)

See, she didn't mean anything bad.

(Turns back to PENELOPE.)

So what did you say about me?

RITA

Just that you're shallow and have no real purpose for existing.

MISTY

What?!

PENELOPE

I did not! All I was trying to say is that being a Christian is more important to me than anything in the whole world.

(Turns to RITA.)

I'm sorry, I didn't mean to hurt your feelings, and I wish my being a Christian didn't bother you so much. I don't ever want anything to come between our friendship.

RITA

(Rolls her eyes but her tone is softer.)

I'm okay with you being a Christian...all I ask is that you rein it in a little. If you decide you need to pray, don't block traffic while you're doing it. And, Pen, things like trying to turn the Pep Rally into a tent revival...that might be a little over the top too!

PENELOPE

(Laughing.)

Oooone little opening prayer...I'd hardly call that a revival.

RITA

Uh huh, whatever. All I know is that it's time for us to stop flapping our jaws and get going or there won't even be a Pep Rally.

PENELOPE

(Winces, looks over at SAM, then with a guilty smile, holds up a "give me a minute" finger to RITA.)

RITA

(Sighs and frowns.)

You've got two minutes...and don't be late, or when it comes time for you to do your pyramid dismount...you'd better hope God catches you!

(EXIT: RITA and MISTY. PENELOPE watches them go, then walks quietly up behind SAM.)

PENELOPE

He's my *second* favorite President...

SAM

(He should have been startled but gives no reaction.)

PENELOPE

(She continues.)

Do you know why he's my second favorite president?

SAM

(He doesn't turn around, answers after a long pause.)
That's the wrong question.

PENELOPE

What do you mean? How can it be a wrong question?

SAM

(He turns to face PENELOPE with a wry smile.)
If you had asked, "Do you *want* to know why he's my second favorite president?" I could have said, "No", and saved us both a lot of time.

PENELOPE

What a mean thing to say.

SAM

No, just honest.

PENELOPE

You can be honest without hurting someone's feelings. If you didn't want to be bothered right now you could just said so.

SAM

I think I did, and yet here you still are...bothering away.

PENELOPE

I'm just trying to be friendly.

SAM

(He studies PENELOPE for a moment.)

Now who's not being truthful?

PENELOPE

Why do you say that?

SAM

C'mon, admit it...you didn't really come over here *just* to be friendly, did you?

PENELOPE

I don't know what you're talking about.

SAM

Oh...so then you *weren't* going to start talking about God?

PENELOPE

(She's momentarily speechless and flustered.)

Actually...if you'll remember...

(She points to picture.)

I was talking about President Lincoln.

SAM

I think we're back to that honesty thing again. But, by all means, go right ahead...tell me, why was good old Abe your *second* favorite president?

PENELOPE

(Very sheepish.)

Well, I guess there *is* just a smidge about God in what I was going to say...

(Rushes on.)

Mr. Lincoln prayed a lot, but *George Washington* is my favorite because he was completely devoted to God in everything he did.

SAM

Wow, that's quite a smidgeon.

PENELOPE

I'm sorry...

(She grimaces and shakes her head.)

...no, you're right, I need to be honest, and I'm not sorry. I can't stop talking about God any more than I can stop breathing...and I don't want to.

(She gets soft and sincere.)

But I really did come over here to be friendly. I just can't think of a better way of doing it than talking about the Lord.

SAM

That's great, but really, I just don't want to hear it right now.

PENELOPE

(She's suddenly on the verge of tears.)

SAM

(He looks unsure, then concerned.)

Hey, I didn't to mean upset you...*I know you really were just being nice.*

PENELOPE

(She fights for composure.)

I'm sorry. I'm fine, really. It's just been a hard day. I can't seem to do or say anything right. When I saw you and Alex get into it this morning I felt like God wanted me to reach out to you. But all I did was make you mad, and now you're the one trying to make me feel better...*and guess what...you're doing a better job than I did.*

(She pauses then speaks with frustration.)

How pathetic is that! No offense, but someone who doesn't even believe in God isn't supposed to be better at comforting people than a Christian!

SAM

I never said I don't believe in God.

PENELOPE

(Tips head to side, raises her eyebrows.)

Excuse me...?

SAM

I believe in God, I'm a Christian too.

PENELOPE

Well then, what was all of...

(She waves her hands around in front of her.)

...this?!

SAM

I believe in Him...that doesn't mean I want to talk about Him.

PENELOPE

Why not?!

SAM

Would it do any good to say it's personal?

(He holds up a hand to cut her off before she can answer.)

Here's a better question...if I tell you, will you go away and leave me alone?

PENELOPE

(She still looks confused, but nods her head.)

SAM

It's simple. I don't want to talk about God because I'm mad at Him.

PENELOPE

You're mad at God?

(Beat.)

You're mad at God?!

(Opened mouth, double beat.)

How can you be mad at God? *He's God!* That's just ridiculous.

SAM

(Frowns, shrugs.)

Like I said, *it's personal*. Now, I kept my part of the bargain...it's your turn.

(Makes a "scurry off" motion.)

PENELOPE

No way! You did not! Not even close! "I'm mad" isn't any more of an answer than saying "it's personal was"...which you already agreed wasn't an answer. You haven't kept your part of the bargain at all! So don't...

(Makes "scurry off" motion.)

...me.

SAM

(Sighs.)

I'm not sure what bothers me more, that I actually understood what you just said, or that I'm going to go along with it.

(Beat.)

Whatever...if you must know...*and obviously you do!* I'm mad at God because He took my dad away.

PENELOPE

(She's suddenly horrified.)

Oh no! You're dad died? I'm so sorry!

SAM

No...no, it's not like that; at least not yet. It's just that he's in the Army, and he's been deployed overseas for most of the last two years.

PENELOPE

Oh, that's good...I mean, compared to...anyway, I'm glad he's still alive.

(She pauses, looks puzzled.)

How's that God's fault?

SAM

He's a chaplain.

PENELOPE

(She gives SAM a "yesss?" look.)

SAM

That *means* he's a *minister* in the Army.

PENELOPE

(She gives SAM a "no kidding" look.)

SAM

So...he'd be home if he wasn't over there...

(He holds up his fingers and makes "quotation marks".)
...working for God.

PENELOPE

But I'd think you'd be proud of him for what he's doing?

SAM

(Shrugs.)

Sure.

PENELOPE

Sooo...you're proud of what your dad's doing...*but you're mad that he's doing it?*

SAM

Exactly! Now you're getting it.

PENELOPE

Nooo, I don't think so. If he's doing what he should be doing...*why be mad?*

(The pace of the conversation really starts to pick up speed.)

SAM

I didn't say he's doing what he should be doing.

PENELOPE

You wouldn't be proud of what he's doing if he's doing something he shouldn't be doing.

SAM

I didn't say he shouldn't be doing *it*...I said, *he shouldn't be doing it.*

PENELOPE

It's okay to do it, but he shouldn't do it?

SAM

Bingo! Give the girl a gold star.

PENELOPE

No! There's no Bingo! If it's okay to do it, then he should do it!

SAM

(He shakes his head decisively.)

No...he doesn't even want to do it!

PENELOPE

Then why's he doing it?

SAM

Because *God* wants him to.

PENELOPE

But serving God is a good thing.

SAM

(He nods.)

Agreed.

PENELOPE

Then *why* are you mad?

SAM

Because, *he* shouldn't do it!

PENELOPE

So, it's okay that he wants to do what God wants him to do, but it's not okay that he's actually doing it?

SAM

(Nods confidently.)

PENELOPE

(She tilts her head from side to side studying SAM.)
Okay, let me see if I've got this straight...you're *not* mad at your dad for doing what he's doing, *because* he's only doing what he's doing because he believes he's doing what God wants him to be doing. *But* you are mad because *he's* doing what he's doing, because he believes it's what *God* wants him to be doing!

SAM

(SAM is now the one looking confused.)

(The dialog returns to a normal pace.)

PENELOPE

(She confidently pronounces.)

You're mad at God because if your dad wasn't trying to serve Him he'd still be home!

SAM

Isn't that what I said?

PENELOPE

(She answers a little patronizingly.)

Maybe, but you have kind of a funny, drawn out way of explaining it.

SAM

(He looks at her in stunned silence.)

(SFX: bell rings. STUDENTS start settling into their desks.)

PENELOPE

(Her eyes go WIDE!)

Oh no! Rita...cheerleading!

(Pats SAM on the arm.)

It's nice to meet you...I think. Bye.

(EXIT: PENELOPE, she rushes out the door. SAM watches her go with a bemused expression, then walks over to stand in front a picture of George Washington. LARRY stands up and motions for DARRELL and NORMAN to join him, which they do.)

LARRY

It's time to test my theory. Darrell, I need you to sneak up behind the Sam kid and whack him in the head with your science book.

DARRELL

Ah Yeah, that's not going to happen.

LARRY

Why not?

DARRELL

I don't buy into your whole *super-geek* theory, Larry, but I'm pretty sure Sam could still kick my butt.

LARRY

(Frowns, considers, turns to NORMAN.)
Okay Norm, it looks like it's up to you, my man.

NORMAN

(He gets wide eyed and starts shaking his head rapidly.)

LARRY

It *wasn't* a request. Need I remind you that you're still in your probationary period as the newest member of the Gifted Entities with Extraordinary Knowledge Society.

NORMAN

(He frowns and nods.)

LARRY

Good, so then you'll do it?

NORMAN

(Looks down dejectedly but doesn't move.)

DARRELL

(He interrupts accusingly.)
Why don't you do it, Larry?

LARRY

Well clearly, I *would* be the best choice. But to be faithful to proper scientific principle I have to maintain my objectivity or it will ruin the whole experiment.

(He looks around until his eyes lock on HAROLD.)

Harold...

(He stops himself mid-sentence, then continues.)

...Trunk, could we have a word with you...please.

HAROLD

(He's suspicious, but gets up to join the GEEKS.)
What do you want?

LARRY

Do I have to *want* something? Can't I just take the opportunity to spend time with an old friend?

HAROLD

You haven't spoken a single word to me in over a year.

LARRY

(His tone is very sugary.)

I admit I was a *little* upset when you abandoned us to become one of Alex's toadies. Benedict Arnold probably went through the same thing.

TRUNK

I told you, my dad made me join the football team.

LARRY

Hey, who am I to judge. I'm sure you feel you had perfectly good reasons for stabbing your life-long friends in the back. But hey, that's all water under the bridge. I say, let's let bygones be bygones.

HAROLD

Yeah, whatever. What do you want, Larry?

LARRY

I was just hoping that deep down, somewhere inside of all that muscle-bound, traitorous mass of protoplasm of yours, there just might possibly be one last glimmer of decency.

HAROLD

You know, Larry, just because we used to be friends...that doesn't mean I won't hurt you.

LARRY

Fine...I'm just trying to do the decent thing and save him...

(He points over at SAM.)

...from getting pummeled by Alex. Not that you would care, what's the big deal if one more innocent...

HAROLD

(He cuts LARRY off flat.)

Forget it. Alex is really ticked. He's going to make an example out of the new kid and there's nothing you can do about it.

LARRY

But there might be something you could do about it...

(EVERYONE looks at Larry expectantly.)

LARRY

It's simple really...Alex wants this kid punished. Sooo, you do it for him. Only instead of totally pulverizing him, just mess him up a little bit.

(He mimes throwing punches in an uncoordinated manner.) Give him a couple of black eyes or something trivial like that. Alex is happy and the new kid gets to keep eating solid food...everybody wins.

HAROLD

Okay...so what's in it for you?

LARRY

Let's just say some of us have an inborn sense of loyalty to those of a kindred spirit. It's really not something someone like you could ever understand...

DARRELL

(Quickly interjects.)

He's right, Harold. Alex wouldn't have any reason to beat him up if you already did it. You don't want him to really get hurt do you?

HAROLD

(He considers, then looks at MS. CHADWICK'S empty desk.) What if the teacher walks in while I'm doing it? I could get suspended?

LARRY

Not a chance, Ms. Chadwick is always late.

(He turns to DARRELL for support.)

What are the odds that she comes back before Trunk's finished pounding on the Sam kid, Darrell?

DARRELL

How would I know?

LARRY

Work with me here, you're the math wizard. Just get me in the ballpark.

DARRELL

(He huffs then considers for only seconds.)

There's a slightly less than a 2.36% chance that she walks in before the bell rings.

LARRY

That's a tight ballpark.

DARRELL

(He shrugs.)

Of the 170 days of school we've had so far, she's only been punctual coming back from lunch four times. The rest is hardly worth calling a calculation.

LARRY

(He smiles and turns to HAROLD.)

There you go...it's clobberin' time!

HAROLD

So what am I supposed to do, just walk up and punch him in the nose?

LARRY

How about you just sneak up and grab him? That'll save him all the trauma of having to worrying about what's about to happen. Then maybe just squish him a little.

HAROLD

I'm not sure squishing him will satisfy Alex?

LARRY

(He considers.)

Good point. Maybe you'd better throw him against the wall or body-slam him...anything that produces a little blood flow and bruising should suffice.

(HAROLD nods in agreement then starts to sneak/lumber quietly up on SAM.)

LARRY

I didn't think you were going to back me on this one, Darrell.

DARRELL

It wasn't because of your harebrained theory. But what you said about Harold roughing SAM up to save him from Alex...that just might work.

LARRY

Wow, you're right! Even when I'm just making junk up, I'm brilliant!

(DARRELL and NORMAN roll their eyes. HAROLD closes in on SAM.

SFX: The lights flicker and the ACTORS start to move in slow motion (SM) as music plays in the background (**Bach - Double Violin Concerto in D Minor**). HAROLD steps forward and sweeps his arms out intending to wrap SAM up. Simultaneously, SAM, without looking back, ducks down and under his grasping arms. SAM steps slightly back and behind HAROLD, then stands up and pushes HAROLD with one hand toward the nearest desk. End SM.

HAROLD flies at full speed into the desk. HAROLD, now angry, turns to confront SAM, who is calm but looking confused. LARRY rushes forward to intervene.)

LARRY

Whoa, hold on now guys, no need to get excited.

(He puts a restraining hand on HAROLD'S chest.)
We're just having a little fun, everybody just relax.

SAM

What's going on?

LARRY

Nothing...we were just messing around. My friends and I wanted to invite you to be a member of our club and Trunk here was helping us out.

SAM

By having him attack me?

LARRY

What...attack you? No! Uh...Trunk was just being a little overzealous. I asked him to *bring you* over to us and I guess he took it literally...you know how these football types are.

(He gives a nervous laugh, addresses HAROLD.)
Thanks big guy, I think we can take it from here.

(HAROLD glares but silently lumbers to the door. EXIT: Harold.)

LARRY

(He continues, waving DARRELL and NORMAN over.)
So what do you say? Do you want to join our club and become the newest member of the GEEKS.

SAM

Gee, I don't know. Does it come with any benefits besides a free mugging?

LARRY

Ha-ha, that's funny. But that just proves my point; you're quick witted, obviously very intelligent, and skeptical of things until they're proven to be true. All in all, you're a natural born GEEK.

(He hurries to explain further.)

GEEK, of course stands for Gifted Entities with Extraordinary Knowledge.

SAM

Ah, thanks, but I think I'll pass.

(He turns and starts to walk away.)

LARRY

(He excitedly starts to reach out to grab SAM'S arm, gets wide eyed as he realizes what he almost did, freezes for a second, then carefully reaches out with his other hand to draw the reaching one back to safety.)

Hold on...Sam, I haven't told you the best parts yet.

SAM

(He stops and turns around reluctantly.)

LARRY

You want to talk benefits...I'll give you some benefits! How about automatic entry into the top rated chess club in the state...but that's just the beginning. I know you like video games, am I right? Well, how would you like a shot at Halo Origins...but you say, "it's not even due in stores for another six months".

(He points a thumb at his own chest.)

But I say, who cares when you're talking to Beta Tester number 581...mi Halo, su Halo...

(He points at DARRELL, who just arrived with NORMAN.)
...and forget about a rumble pack controller, you haven't lived until you experience what my friend Darrell can do with a Kinect sensor and half a dozen shock collars.

SAM

(He looks concerned, then shakes his head.)
Look, I really appreciate the offer, but...

LARRY

(He's getting near panic.)
Wait, wait! You haven't let me explain the very best part...

(He looks at DARRELL and NORMAN uncertainly.)
...I'm going to let you in on our ultra, top secret, code Omega GEEKS prime covert action project...

(There is a moment of silence as DARRELL and NORMAN get very wide eyes and look at LARRY in fear and disbelief.)

LARRY

(He surveys the area then leans in to tell SAM.)
We're going to hack all the cheerleaders cell phones and plant subliminal messages inside their voice and text messages...a few days after that...*presto chango*...they will be completely and irresistibly, head over heels-in-love-with-us!

SAM

(He grimaces, then shakes it off.)
I'm going to just pretend I didn't hear that. Look, I'm sorry, but I'm just not interested.

LARRY

(He's in full panic now.)
Wait, wait, wait...pleaaaaaase, I'm begging you!

SAM

(He reluctantly turns around again.)

LARRY

Alright, I'm putting all my cards on the table here...all my chips are in the pot...I'm all in...I'm throwing in the family fortune and the kitchen sink...it's all or nothing...the Big Apple or bust...

DARRELL

(He elbows LARRY in the ribs.)

LARRY

(He looks over at DARRELL.)

Thanks, I needed that.

(He takes a deep breath and addresses SAM.)

All I've got left here is the sad truth...you're our last hope, Obi-Wan. We're desperate! It's the same thing every day. Alex only tried to cheat off of you once...for us, it's our very existence. Every morning we come to school knowing we have to be the jocks copy slaves or get beat up.

DARRELL

Actually, we usually get whacked around even when we let them cheat off of us.

LARRY

We could go on, but suffice it to say...we're pathetic, and life sucks.

SAM

Wow! You're right...that sounds pretty bad.

(The GEEKS look at him in astonishment.)

SAM

Okay, *really* bad...even horrible. But I don't see how I can help.

LARRY

All you have to do is join our group! If you did that, with your super-geek powers, the jocks wouldn't dare to mess with us anymore!

SAM

Hold on a second. I don't have any superpowers...geek or otherwise.

LARRY

But we saw you...

(LARRY looks at DARRELL and NORMAN who nod enthusiastically.)

DARRELL

I was skeptical at first, but I know what I saw. The dynamics involved in thwarting Alex's attack this morning coupled with what you just did to Harold...those things are just *not* within the capabilities of a normal teenager. Initial observations suggest hyper hearing and reflexes, likely coupled with an innate ability to rapidly adapt to a dynamic environment, and...

SAM

(Raises a hand to cut DARRELL off.)

Or, maybe just a little *training*.

LARRY

Training?! What kind of training?

SAM

(Shrugs.)

Martial arts.

LARRY

You mean like Kung Fu or Karate?

SAM

Some of those, but mostly Jujitsu.

LARRY

So what we saw you do...that can be taught...*to anyone?!*

SAM

Sure...

(He then looks uncertainly around at THE GEEKS.)

...I guess???

LARRY

(He throws his fist in the air triumphantly.)

LET THE SECOND GREAT EMANCIPATION BEGIN!

SCENE 4: Odds and Beginnings

*(SETTING: MS. CHADWICK'S Classroom.
The classroom is empty except for MS. CHADWICK.)*

MS. CHADWICK

(She checks her watch impatiently, grabs a pile of folders off her desk and prepares to run out the door.)

(ENTER: ALEX, he comes in looking very unhappy to even be there. When he sees the frown on MS. CHADWICK'S face he does a quick turn about and tries to escape.)

MS. CHADWICK

Not so fast, Alex.

ALEX

(He reluctantly turns around and glowers.)

MS. CHADWICK

I was starting to think you weren't going to show up for our meeting.

ALEX

Sorry, I'm just not in a big hurry to get yelled at some more...I could have stayed home for that!

MS. CHADWICK

I'm not going to yell at you. I asked you to come see me this morning so we can work out a way for you to pass this class.

ALEX

RIGHT! Like that's going to happen!

(MS. CHADWICK frowns at ALEX'S response and studies him silently for a moment. Meanwhile, PENELOPE sticks her head through the doorway and gets an excited look on her face. MS. CHADWICK and ALEX continue talking without noticing her eavesdropping.)

MS. CHADWICK

So do you just want to give up and take an "F"?

(She looks intently at ALEX.)

You do realize what that would mean don't you?

ALEX

(He just shrugs his shoulders apathetically.)

MS. CHADWICK

If you're thinking you can make it up in Summer School, you're right, but you'll still be ineligible for sports next year until the second semester starts and by then...

ALEX

I know what it means, no football!

MS. CHADWICK

Okay, so what are you going to do about it?

ALEX

What can I do about it...you're going to flunk me no matter how much it messes up my life.

MS. CHADWICK

(She answers calmly but firmly.)

I'm going to give you whatever grade *you* earn.

(Pause.)

Alex, I know how much you love football, and believe it or not, I do too. But there's a lot more to life than football.

ALEX

(He gives a "whatever" look.)

MS. CHADWICK

I know...last year you were the number three ranked quarterback in the state, and this year you're projected to be number one...and break all the state records in the process.

ALEX

(He gets a haughty look and tone.)

Just watch me...

MS. CHADWICK

If you get to play.

(Pause.)

I don't suppose you know who's records you'd be breaking?

ALEX

Sure, Tommy Brewster, he holds almost all of the high school QB records for our state.

(He flashes a smug smile.)

Until next year!

MS. CHADWICK

You might be right. And if you are, you'll probably even get to meet Uncle Tommy. I know he's been following your career and he'll want to come by and congratulate you in person.

ALEX

Tommy Brewster is your uncle?!

MS. CHADWICK

He sure is. I grew up watching him set all those High School records. I watched him in college too...for the two games he got to play before he tore his ACL and ended his career.

ALEX

(He's troubled.)

I'm sorry about your uncle, Ms. C, but that's not going to happen to me.

MS. CHADWICK

Which part...not getting injured or are that you're planning to skip the whole thing by failing this class right now?

ALEX

Do you think I want to get bad grades? Every time I open that big fat stupid history book everything just gets jumbled up in my head. Maybe some people can memorize a million names and dates and places, but I can't!

MS. CHADWICK

You manage to memorize your great big fat playbook well enough.

ALEX

By spending my every waking minute going over, and over it, until my eyes are crossed. Even then, I still don't get it until we do walk-throughs. And on top of that, Coach gives me a wrist band with the plays written on it.

(He smiles.)

Maybe if you let me wear a wrist band with the test answers on it I might do better.

MS. CHADWICK

Nooo...that's not going to happen. But it's really not about memorizing things as much as understanding the important people and events that shaped our country and our world. I think if you just put a little more effort into it...

(PENELOPE bursts into the room, interrupting and startling MS. CHADWICK and ALEX as she rushes up to join them.)

PENELOPE

Ms. Chadwick, I have an idea that might help...

MS. CHADWICK

(She recovers and speaks angrily.)

Penelope, I really don't approve of either you're eavesdropping or interrupting us.

PENELOPE

I'm sorry, but I was passing by and heard what Alex said about having trouble learning, and, well, I think I've got a really, really great idea that I just know in my heart will help.

(She looks at them expectantly.)

Do you want to hear it?

MS. CHADWICK

(She frowns, but looks questioningly at ALEX.)

ALEX

It can't be any worse than getting lectured some more.

MS. CHADWICK

(She gives ALEX a disapproving look but nods.)

Alright, Penelope, let's hear it.

PENELOPE

It's simple...Alex needs a tutor!

(She notices neither MS. CHADWICK nor ALEX seem impressed.)
Don't you see? Alex isn't a visual learner, that's why he has such a hard time memorizing. But if someone were to work with him in a more hands-on way...well, I just think it would be a whole lot easier.

(She takes a deep breath.)

You see Ms. Chadwick, there are a lot of people out there who struggle with learning by reading a book, no matter how much they try...

MS. CHADWICK

You don't have to explain learning styles to me, Penelope. I *do* have a degree in education.

(She considers for a moment then addresses ALEX.)

But she has a point, Alex. Maybe if the two of you were to work together...

ALEX

Huh uh, no way. We're talking about history here, not religion. Her grades in your class aren't all that much better than mine. I don't need any help getting the answers *wrong!*

MS. CHADWICK

Now *he* has a point, Penelope. You may not be in danger of failing, but I'm not sure you'd be my first choice as a tutor either.

PENELOPE

While I think my "C" average is *quite* respectable...I was thinking of someone who is a real whiz at history to tutor Alex.

MS. CHADWICK AND ALEX

(In unison.)

Who?

PENELOPE

Well...I was thinking of the new student...Sam?

ALEX

(He clouds up and starts shaking his head.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She doesn't notice ALEX'S reaction.)

Did Sam say he'd be willing to tutor someone?

PENELOPE

(She's obviously choosing her words very carefully.)
I've talked to him...and I believe he's very open
to...*helping* someone who needs it.

ALEX

No way, not happening!

MS. CHADWICK

Why not? If he's willing, he's the top student in class,
Alex.

ALEX

He's also a *pretentious, self-centered...JERK!* He doesn't
have any respect for anyone or anything. He just walks
around with his nose stuck up in the air like some kind of
prima donna.

MS. CHADWICK AND PENELOPE

(In unison.)

Sam?!

ALEX

Yeah Sam, or whatever his name is!

MS. CHADWICK

I have to tell you, Alex, I haven't seen Sam acting
anything like what you've just described. He seems like a
nice, respectful young man.

ALEX

Whatever, it's not an option...I'd rather take my chances
with the Apostle Penelope here.

(He waves both hands.)

You know what, never mind, I'll get my own tutor.

MS. CHADWICK

Alex, if you're thinking of Walter or Vinnie, I don't think
either of them are any more suitable tutors than
Penelope...

PENELOPE

Hey!

ALEX

I wasn't talking about them. I'll get Zipit, or one of the other Geeks to be my tutor.

MS. CHADWICK

Alex, you know I don't approve of that kind of talk!

ALEX

Fine...I meant to say...I'll get *Larry* to be my tutor. As a matter of fact, I'll go find him right now and set up a meeting after school today. Okay?

MS. CHADWICK

If Larry is willing to help, I think he would make an excellent tutor...as long as the two of you stay focused on the task at hand instead of getting caught up in horseplay like often happens.

ALEX

Oh, don't worry about that, I'm not playing around anymore.

PENELOPE

(She gets a worried look on her face but remains silent.)

SCENE 5: Penelope Peacemaker

(SETTING: School Hallway.

PENELOPE is standing alone in front of her open locker frowning off into space.

ENTER: SAM, he walks up from behind and joins her.)

SAM

What's the matter, did you misplace the notes for your next sermon?

PENELOPE

(Startled, recovers.)

Ha-ha, very funny. Actually, I'm just thinking about all the things I've forgotten or messed up today, thank you.

SAM

(Cheerful, smiling.)

But the day's just beginning; we haven't even made it to class yet.

PENELOPE

Right, but my lunch, homework and cheerleading uniform are all sitting on the kitchen table at home.

SAM

That does sound bad...

(He smiles even bigger.)

But that's only the forgotten part...what about everything you've messed up.

PENELOPE

If you must know...Ms. Chadwick thinks I'm a busybody...

(SAM gives an "understandable" look, PENELOPE frowns.)

...whenever I talk to someone, they either ignore what I say, or get mad at me...

(SAM gives another "understandable" look, PENELOPE glares.)

...and on top of all that, my best friend is threatening have me thrown me off the cheerleading team...apparently I didn't manage to fall down and humiliate myself enough times yesterday.

SAM

Wow! This is a Penelope I haven't met before.

PENELOPE

What do you know about me? The first time we said more than hi to each other was just yesterday.

SAM

Maybe so, but I've been watching you since I moved here.

PENELOPE

Oh really? Have you now?

SAM

(He waves a dismissing hand.)

Don't make too much out of it, you're kind of hard to overlook. You're not exactly the shy, retiring type.

PENELOPE

Why thank you so much for trying to cheer me up.

SAM

No problem. Anyway, for what it's worth, bitter and pessimistic don't really suit you.

PENELOPE

I'm sorry, but I'm just having a very tough morning...week...month...year...

(Deep sigh.)

...life.

SAM

(He laughs and shakes his head.)

Nooo...apathy's not working for you either. Seriously, *something* in your life must be going well.

PENELOPE

(She shakes her head and looks and sounds pitiful.)

No, not really...

(She pauses.)

...well actually, now that you mention it, one of my failures today probably saved you from being really mad at me too. So I guess *that's* kind of a good thing.

SAM

Really...? So, was it good that it didn't work out, or good that I'm not going to be mad at you?

PENELOPE
(She shrugs forlornly.)

Who knows.

SAM
Well, out of idle curiosity, just what was it that you tried to do that would have made me so angry?

PENELOPE
(She has a far away, detached look.)
Nothing really, I just volunteered you to tutor Alex for the history exam.

SAM
(He's instantly smoking mad.)
YOU DID WHAT?!!! What were you thinking!?
(He fights to calm down, carefully pronounces each word.)
Why would I want to tutor Alex? He's nothing but a pretentious...self-centered...JERK! He doesn't have any respect for anyone, or anything. All the guy does is walk around with his nose stuck up in the air.

PENELOPE
(Sigh.)
You forgot to call him a prima donna.

SAM
That too! What on earth made you think I would ever be willing to tutor *him*?

PENELOPE
(She sighs.)
Because God and your dad would want you to?

SAM
(He visibly bites his lip to keep from yelling at her.)

PENELOPE
(She's about to cry.)
So much for you're not being mad at me.

(ENTER: the GEEKS. They come sauntering down the hall. LARRY looks and sounds very excited, while DARRELL and NORMAN have very worried expressions on their faces.)

LARRY

(He's literally strutting.)
We are sooooo bad! You don't wanna mess with the GEEKS,
huh uh! 'Cause if you do...we will put a hurt on your
whole world...Oh yeah!

(SAM and PENELOPE stand silently in wide eyed wonder. The GEEKS stop just short of joining THEM. LARRY stops and drops into an awkward looking karate stance. He turns his head dramatically to one side, opens one eye very wide, while squinting the other. His lips curl in a weird snarl as he slowly brings his hands up in a disjointed looking motion with his fingers bizarrely hooked. All the while he is making a shrill sound like a cat's tail being pulled. Once he reaches his full pose he addresses PENELOPE.)

LARRY

What you lookin' at woman?! I'll knock the pretty right off your face...don't you think I won't!

PENELOPE

(She stands open mouthed for a moment then addresses SAM.)
What's he doing?

SAM

I believe he's trying to do a Karate move.

LARRY

That's right. That's me. I'm a lean, mean, highly lethal, k-a-r-a-t-e machine!

(He makes some uncoordinated looking arm movements.)
I have been trained by my Sensei Master to be a living weapon of precision, stealth, and devastation.

PENELOPE

(She stage whispers to SAM.)
What kind of an idiot would try and teach *him* karate?

SAM

(He gives a heavy sigh.)
All I can say is...it seemed like a good idea at the time.

PENELOPE

(She looks at SAM in disbelief.)

LARRY

(He stands and places his hands together under his chin.)
Master Sam's training has allowed us to throw off the chains of bondage from our tyrannical oppressors. The challenge was great but we were resolute, and in the end...victorious.

SAM

What do you mean...victorious?

LARRY

It is just as I stated, Sensei. The evil warlords attempted to subdue us, but we repelled them.

PENELOPE

Are you saying you got into a fight, Larry?!

LARRY

It did not come to blows, my lady, they ran like the weak hearted cowards they truly are.

SAM

Really...they ran away?

(He turns to DARRELL.)

What really happened?

DARRELL

(He looks nervously back over his shoulder.)

Alex and his goons came up and ordered Larry to tutor them. When Larry refused, Alex threatened him, so Larry started doing some of the stuff you showed us last night.

PENELOPE

(She says naively.)

Larry, it's okay...Alex was supposed to ask you to tutor him...but he shouldn't have threatened you...obviously that wasn't necessary.

SAM

So all the jocks just ran away?

LARRY

(He solemnly nods his head.)

DARRELL

Actually, Mr. Spencer came by and told everyone to get to class or he'd send us all to detention.

LARRY

It's true. The Hall Guardian did intercede before the vile rogues could receive their just reward.

PENELOPE

Well there you have it...Larry, you could have easily ended up in detention.

(She pointedly addresses SAM.)

Violence never solves anything! You're a preacher's son, you should know that.

SAM

Have you ever read about all the *smiting* in the Bible? *Smiting* isn't a *non-contact sport*.

PENELOPE

(She crosses her arms and looks up and away.)

You say potato, I say potahto.

SAM

What's that supposed to mean?

(Voices from outside the room interrupt the argument and draw EVERYONE'S attention. ENTER: the JOCKS, who rush into the room. The GEEKS see them and turn around to face them. LARRY looks determined but DARRELL and NORMAN are terrified.)

ALEX

There they are...and that weasel Sam's with them!

(SFX: SM begins: The JOCKS all start "rushing" toward the GEEKS with clinched fists and angry expressions. Simultaneously, all three GEEKS will start to drop into their karate stances with various uncoordinated, disjointed movements and facial expressions. DARRELL and NORMAN should have expressions of fear mingled into their other facial contortions.)

SAM will be stoic while PENELOPE goes from surprised and worried to outraged. The scene should play out in SM for a short time with the two sides moving toward each other and PENELOPE starting to "rush" between them. End SM.)

PENELOPE

(She stops and throws her hands in the air.)
STOP! Everyone just stop it right now!

(EVERYONE freezes and turns only their heads to look at her.)

PENELOPE

(She's highly emotionally charged.)
What do you think you're doing?! Didn't Mr. Spencer just threaten you with detention for this?
(She points down the hall.)
We are only three doors down from the principal's office. And if I know Mrs. Finny, she'd be more likely to expel you than give you detention.

(The JOCKS and GEEKS all start to slowly take up normal stances while not meeting her gaze and looking a little embarrassed at the same time.)

ALEX

Hey, we didn't start it.

PENELOPE

(She points a silencing finger.)
Uh huh...I don't want to hear it! I'm sick and tired of you blame everyone else for your problems!
(She turns to the GEEKS.)
Really?! You're supposed to be the smart ones...is this the best solution you came up with to solve your problems?

(LARRY looks indignant and starts to say something, but DARRELL clamps a hand over his mouth before he can get a word out.)

PENELOPE

(She rounds on SAM.)

And you...you're the cause of this! I would have thought you were smarter *and wiser* than this. What are you going to do next...teach a puppy to play in the street?

SAM

Hey, you can't blame me for this...all I did was...

PENELOPE

(She makes slashing motion with her arm to cut him off.)
Yes I can!

(She takes a breath and somewhat composes herself.)
But I'm going to let it go...because...

(She looks around and makes eye contact with EVERYONE.)
...we're all just going to pretend that *none of this...ever happened*.

(She looks at ALEX.)

You! You need to stop adding to your troubles and start *fixing* them. Like it or not, you need other people to do that. But, guess what...no one's going to help you if you keep trying to beat them up!

(She holds up a hand when ALEX tries to say something.)
You may not like it, but you know I'm right. Just plan on being in Ms. Chadwick's room after school today...and every day, until the final next Friday.

(She addresses the other JOCKS.)

And it wouldn't hurt the rest of you to be there and get a little tutoring too.

(She looks back to SAM.)

You'll be there too, mister Sensei.

(She glares him to silence when SAM starts to protest.)
Save your breath...if you won't do this for God...or your dad, then do it because it's the least you can do after nearly getting your...*apprentices*...

(She waves at the GEEKS.)

...sent to the emergency room.

(She looks at the GEEKS and shakes her head.)

Honestly, I don't know why any of you should come, but I wish you would, we could really use your help.

(SFX: Bell rings.)

Everyone flinches as if they are going to hurry off to class, then slowly turn back and look expectantly at PENELOPE, afraid to leave without her permission.

PENELOPE

(She gives EVERYONE a perturbed look.)

What?

(She waves her hands impatiently for them to go.)

Shoo...get going or you'll be late for class.

(EVERYONE starts to rush off as PENELOPE looks after them shaking her head.)

ACT II

SCENE 6: Actions Speak Louder than Words

*(SETTING: Center Stage under the Spotlight.
PENELOPE stands looking thoughtful. After a moment
she looks up and starts to pray.)*

PENELOPE

God, You are amazing!

(She sighs.)

I can't believe what just happened. A few hours ago everyone was *literally* about to tear each other to pieces, and now they're all getting ready to come together, working side-by-side.

(Pause, sighs.)

I know that wasn't me...all I did was run off at the mouth like I always do. But somehow, You made even that work out. You are sooo awesome, God!

(She gets a dreamy look.)

I can't wait...it's going to be so great. I can see it all clear as day. The boys will be at their desk with their books open, looking at each other with...

*(Her dreamy look abruptly becomes wide eyed dismay.)
...with spite...anger...and hatred, written all over their
faces!*

(She stops and stands there wide-eyed for a few moments.)
Lord, I sure hope You did this, because if it was just me...I think I might have just organized a riot!

(SETTING: MS. CHADWICK'S Classroom.

SAM and the GEEKS are standing on one side of the room glairing across at ALEX and the JOCKS, who are glaring back.

ENTER: PENELOPE, who rushes through the door and comes to an abrupt stop. She surveys the room with trepidation for a few moments before gritting her teeth and striding purposefully to center stage.)

PENELOPE

Alright, Ms. Chadwick said we can use the room until the custodian comes through. That gives us about an hour and a half, so we'd better get to it.

(PENELOPE waves EVERYONE closer but besides glaring at her, NO ONE budes an inch.)

PENELOPE

Standing around like a bunch of grumpy statues isn't going to help any of us with the history final.

(She motions again for EVERYONE to join her.)

Come on, let's get to work.

(SAM grudgingly walks toward her, followed by the GEEKS. ALEX watches, then he starts walking, followed by the other JOCKS. EVERYONE gathers in two loose groups around PENELOPE at center stage.)

LARRY

(Stage whispers to DARRELL.)

I don't need help for the final...I have a brain.

VINNIE

Oh yeah? Well, let's see how you like those brains of yours leaking out your ears!

ALEX

(Steps in front of VINNIE.)

Chill out, Jet. I don't like it either, but stick to the game plan, next season is riding on this.

(He addresses LARRY.)

Zip it, Zipit, or next time instead of stopping him...I'll give him some help!

LARRY

(He looks worried at first, then recovers with bravado.)
The name's *Larry*, and I'll talk if I want to. Have you
ever heard of a little thing called the freedom of speech?

(*Beat.*)

Oh that's right, history isn't exactly your strong suit is
it?

VINNIE

(Lunges at LARRY but ALEX grabs him with both arms.)
Let me go...we can't let some Geek Freak talk to you that
way.

ALEX

I wish I could.

(He addresses SAM.)

You'd better shut your boy up, or this is going to get ugly
in a hurry.

SAM

This isn't my rodeo...

(He gives PENELOPE a fake smile.)

Do you have something in mind...or are we all just here for
the camaraderie and pleasant conversation?

PENELOPE

(She gives SAM a withering look.)

Why yes I do, thank you so *very much*, Sam.

(She addresses EVERYONE.)

Let's begin with prayer, it's pretty obvious we're going to
need all the help we can get.

(*The GEEKS and JOCKS look around at PENELOPE
and each other, uncertain how to respond.*)

SAM

Good by me.

ALEX

Whatever.

VINNIE

Are you kidding me? Look around...we're in school, not
church!

WALTER

(Laughing.)

How would you know, Jet? Have you ever even stepped foot inside of a church?

VINNIE

That's not the point...all I'm sayin' is church is for church stuff, and school is for school stuff.

WALTER

Oh, that's pure genius!

(He looks at the GEEKS.)

What do you say, boys...do you have room for Vinnie in your little club?

ALEX

Both of you...knock it off!

(He addresses PENELOPE.)

Just do your stupid prayer thing and let's get this over with.

PENELOPE

Is that alright with you, Vinnie?

VINNIE

(He avoids eye contact and silently looks at the ceiling.)

PENELOPE

Alright...I'll take that as a yes.

(PENELOPE bows her head. SAM and WALTER do the same. EVERYONE, except VINNIE looks unsure but they also bow their heads when PENELOPE starts to pray. VINNIE crosses his arms and continues to stare at the ceiling impatiently until the prayer is over.)

PENELOPE

Lord, I thank you for bringing us here together. Please help us to work well together, to put our differences aside and to even to have good fellowship. May our time here be fruitful beyond our wildest expectations. We ask it in the precious name of Jesus...Amen.

(SAM and WALTER say "Amen". The others, somewhat uncertain that PENELOPE is finished, slowly lift their heads.)

PENELOPE

Okay, the main reason we're here is to help Alex prepare for the history final. But after talking with him and Ms. Chadwick, normal book study isn't going to be enough...

DARRELL

(Interjects.)

If he has a cognitive impairment he may not even need to take the normal test. He would qualify for special instruction.

ALEX

Dude, there's nothing wrong with *my* cogs!

WALTER

I don't know, Alex, he may have something there. Coach always said you were...*special*.

PENELOPE

All I was saying is that, Alex...and a lot of other *normal* students, learn better by seeing things than by reading about them.

WALTER

(He holds up a pencil.)

Alex, this...is...a...p-e-n-c-i-l.

ALEX

Just who's side are you on anyway, *teammate*?

WALTER

(He smiles good naturedly.)

Hey, if I've got to be here, I'm going to at least to have a little fun.

PENELOPE

Walter, you are *not* helping.

(She looks around at the group.)

Does anyone have any *positive* suggestions?

DARRELL

Actually he may be right!

(EVERYONE looks at him and he suddenly gets nervous.)

Uhh...not about the pencil...umm...but if we study pictures, instead of text...well, ahhh...studies prove, all of us should learn better.

WALTER

There you go, it's finally confirmed. I *am* a genius.

ALEX

It won't work. My playbook is nothing but pictures, but I can't remember them either, not me until we walk through them on the field.

SAM

Okay, so that's what we do.

(He holds up his history book and opens it.)

We walk through history like it's a football play.

(He glances at the book then mimes swinging a leg over an imaginary horse and starts to "gallop" in place.)

Look everyone, see and hear the historic ride of Paul Revere...

(He straightens up and starts marching.)

...wailing and warning...the British are coming, the British are coming...

(Still marching, he holds up a clenched fist.)

...one lantern if by land...

(He stops marching, holds up both clenched fists.)

...two lanterns if by sea.

(He starts doing a rowing motion.)

VINNIE

That's the dumbest thing I've ever seen. We're all a little old to be playing *let's pretend*.

SAM

(He shrugs, then turns some pages and begins to read.)

The Battles of Lexington and Concord, also known as "the shot heard around the world" marked the beginning of military hostilities during the American Revolution. The battles, which were in actuality one long continuous running engagement, were fought on the morning of April 19, 1775, between British Army regulars and colonial militia.

(He waits for a few moments then turns to ALEX.)

Alex, what did you get out of what I just read?

ALEX

(He responds with irritation.)

What?

SAM

Please, just go along with me for a minute.

ALEX

Fine, whatever...I don't know, it was about some kind of battle, between the English and Americans, I think.

SAM

Good...how about any other details?

ALEX

(He just frowns and slowly shakes his head.)

SAM

Okay, how about the part I acted out?

ALEX

(He considers, then imitates SAM's actions as he answers.) This guy Paul Revere...rode his horse...to warn people...about the British. One lantern meant they were marching, two meant they were swimming...I guess.

SAM

Two lanterns actually meant they were coming by boat, but I think you'd get it on a multiple choice test.

(He looks at VINNIE expectantly.)

VINNIE

No way! The Jet is not going to play make believe with a bunch of geek losers.

(He addresses ALEX.)

You can't be serious about this?

ALEX

You wanna try catching passes from Arnold next year?

VINNIE

Even *that* would be better than this! No thanks. You have fun with your new friends, amigo, the Jet don't want no part of it.

(He shoulders past PENELOPE.)

Outta my way, God Girl!

(VINNIE storms off, slamming the door as he EXITS. EVERYONE looks a little stunned as he leaves, especially PENELOPE.)

WALTER

(He addresses PENELOPE.)

Don't worry about him. *The Jet* likes you to notice he's around...even if he has to leave to do it.

PENELOPE

Okay. Well then, we have almost five hundred years of history to cover...where should we begin?

LARRY

Eww...eww...eww...

(He jumps up and climbs up onto his chair.)

Gettysburg...I do a mean Abraham Lincoln.

(He makes a circle with both hands over his head to outline a stovepipe hat, then mimes stroking his beard.)

Four score and seven years ago our fathers brought forth on this continent a new nation, conceived in liberty, and dedicated to the proposition that all men are created equal.

SCENE 7: Pride Goeth Before...

*(SETTING: Center Stage under the Spotlight.
PENELOPE is standing with a big smile on her face.
After a moment she looks up and starts to pray.)*

PENELOPE

How could I have ever doubted you, God. Talk about miracles...*not only did we learn today, but I think everyone actually had fun too!*

(She opens her eyes and starts talking more than praying.)

I just need to have more faith! That's it!

(She nods assertively.)

Look out world, you're about to see what this God girl can do when she sets her mind to it!

(*SETTING: Ms. Chadwick's Classroom.*
ALEX is the only one in the room, sitting at his desk, studying his history book.
ENTER: SAM, who steps into the room, notices ALEX and walks over to sit beside him.)

SAM

Find anything interesting in there?

ALEX

(He's startled, shrugs, then goes back to reading.)
Some guy named Seward just bought the whole state of Alaska for seven million dollars, and the whole country thinks he's an idiot...

(He frowns as he considers.)

...I guess they expected a lot more from their politicians back than we do today.

SAM

You might be on to something there.

(He pauses.)

So, it sounds like your studying is going well?

ALEX

I wish! I studied one chapter for two hours last night and all I can remember is that it's about the United Nations.

SAM

Hey, that's a start, right?.

ALEX

"*The United Nations*" was the *title* of the chapter...I don't think *that's* going to be on the test.

SAM

Okayyyy. Well, what about the stuff we worked on yesterday, did any of that stick with you?

ALEX

Yeah, that's all good.

(He holds up the thick textbook.)

But we're not going to make it through this whole thing before the test.

(He shrugs.)

Even if we do, I've got another year of high school and all of college to get through. Ms. Chadwick's right, I need to

find a way to do this...on my own...without my own private drama team.

SAM

(He nods and considers for a bit.)

Okay, how about this...teachers have to cover testable information in class. So, while they teach...you *visualize*. Just let the scenes playing out in your head like we were all up there acting it out.

ALEX

You really thing that would work?

SAM

It's worth a try. Who knows, it might even work with what you're reading. Instead of trying to memorize things, let the words take shape in your mind.

(SFX: Bell Rings.)

ENTER: STUDENTS, including the JOCKS and GEEKS, who all settle into their seats.

ENTER: PENELOPE, carrying a handful of papers. She is excited and laser focused.)

PENELOPE

(She slaps a paper down on SAM and ALEX's desks.)

Guys, here are the outlines for this afternoon. Make sure you look them over before we start.

SAM

(He glances at the paper then looks up at PENELOPE.)

Good morning.

PENELOPE

(She looks around frantically while sorting papers.)

What? Oh...hi.

SAM

(He picks up his paper.)

And just what exactly are...*these*?

PENELOPE

(Still distracted, locks her gaze on LARRY.)

I already told you, it's your outline for this afternoon.

SAM

Why do we need outlines? We didn't have any yesterday?

PENELOPE

But it would be nice if we had...that would have saved us a lot of time, and frankly, we don't have any to spare.

(Impatiently.)

We can talk about this later, Sam. For now, please just make sure you do your part.

(PENELOPE rushes off to hand out papers to the rest of the STUDY GROUP.)

SAM

No problem, I'm all over that!

(He wads the paper into a ball.)

ALEX

(Looks up from his book with puzzlement.)

What was that all about?

SAM

Apparently, while we weren't looking, someone came along and appointed Penelope queen of the world.

ALEX

(He just shrugs and goes back to his book.)

(ENTER: MS. CHADWICK, who rushes to the front of the class carrying an armload of books. PENELOPE and EVERYONE ELSE settle in for class.)

MS. CHADWICK

Good morning, everyone.

(She looks around as MOST STUDENTS greet her.)

Alright now, who can tell me why the United Nations was created?

(LARRY and DARRELL throw their hands up and start making ape like, grunting sounds. PENELOPE also eagerly puts up her hand.)

MS. CHADWICK

Yes Penelope?

PENELOPE

Actually, Ms. Chadwick, I just wanted to make a suggestion...

(She hurries on before MS. CHADWICK can respond.)
...I was hoping we could change things up a little by acting out the lesson. If we got everyone involved I think they'd get a lot more out of it.

MS. CHADWICK

(She's silent, holding a fake smile for several seconds.)
Wellllll, as much as I appreciate your suggestion, Penelope...considering that I stayed up past midnight preparing this lesson, I think we'll just go ahead and do it the same old *boring* way we *always* do.

PENELOPE

Oh no, I didn't mean to make it sound like you weren't doing a good job, Ms. Chadwick. It's just that yesterday, when we got together after school to study that's what we did and it worked out great.

MS. CHADWICK

(Frostily.)

Yes, I'm sure it did. I actually studied role-play instruction when I got my *Master's Degree* in education. It's a great tool...*when you have time*...which we're quickly running out of.

PENELOPE

Yes ma'am.

MS. CHADWICK

Okay...*Larry*, can you tell me why we have the United Nations?

LARRY

Sure, that's simple, because the League of Nations sucked.

MS. CHADWICK

Well yes, but that's not exactly where I was going.

(She looks at Darrell.)

What about you, Darrell, can you answer the question?

DARRELL

(He's stands up looking very nervous.)

Okay, umm, well, umm, the President, ahh, FDR...Franklin Delano Roosevelt...he and a bunch of other leaders...they ahhh...formed it to keep...the peace?

(He finishes and drops limply back into his seat.)

(ALEX sits up the moment DARRELL starts to speak and looks through his hands like they're a pair of binoculars.)

MS. CHADWICK

That's very good, Darrell.

(She pauses as she notices ALEX'S odd behavior.)

Alex, are you alright?

ALEX

(He turns to look at her through his hand binoculars.)

Yeah I'm fine, keep going.

MS. CHADWICK

(She's perplexed but continues.)

Alright, well, does anyone know what the Atlantic Charter was?

(LARRY does his normal antics. No one else raises a hand.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She ignores Larry and looks at Harold.)

How about you, Harold?

(ALEX turns and focuses on HAROLD while he speaks. When HAROLD says the names of different countries, ALEX will turn and focus on a world map hanging on the wall.)

HAROLD

(He stands up.)

That's the agreement the U.S., Great Britain, the Soviet Union, China and other nations signed forming the U.N.

MS. CHADWICK

Excellent. Thank you, Harold.

ALEX

(He swivels around to focus back on MS. CHADWICK.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She's distracted by ALEX, turns to address him.)

Alex, are you sure you're alright?

ALEX

Yeah, yeah, I'm good, don't stop now.

MS. CHADWICK

Alex, look at me!

ALEX

(Confused, he looks at her through his 'binoculars'.)
What?

MS. CHADWICK

(She holds up her hands to mimic him.)
What's all this about?

ALEX

Nothing, I'm just trying to visualize what's happening.

MS. CHADWICK

Visualizing?

ALEX

(With his hands still up, he nods.)
Yeah, like just now when you guys were talking about signing the paper thing...I imagined the old guy up there with the funny glasses...

(He tunnels in on a picture of FDR.)
...standing on the map...

(He swivels to the map.)
...shaking hands with the Red Coats and a bunch of other guys.

MS. CHADWICK

Oookayyy...I think I see where you're going now. But Britain didn't have Red Coats in 1942...

ALEX

They did yesterday!

MS. CHADWICK

Yesterday?

ALEX

Yeah, you know...Paul Revere...

(He mimics holding reigns and riding a horse.)
...the British are coming, the British are coming...

(He holds up one hand and marches in place.)
...one if by land...

(He starts doing a swimming motion with both arms.)
...two if by sea!

MS. CHADWICK

That's great, Alex, but we studied that weeks ago, not yesterday. In the time period we're covering now, Great Britain's military don't wear red coats and they're our greatest allies.

ALEX

I know that...at least I think I do...I'm just trying to remember all this junk so I can answer it on the test.

MS. CHADWICK

Okay, I'm sorry...

(She makes a hand tunnel.)

You go right ahead with your visualizing. I'm very happy to see you putting so much effort into your studies.

(She takes a breath to compose herself.)

Now besides the Atlantic Charter, what else did the US and the Red Coats...

(She stops, rolls her eyes and sighs.)

(There are several snickers from the STUDENTS. ALEX nods approvingly.)

MS. CHADWICK

...what else did the US and Great Britian do to ensure the U.N. would be successful?

(As she looks around for someone to call upon, ALEX goes back to looking through his tunnel, while LARRY kneels down beside his chair and makes a "director's frame" with his thumbs and index fingers.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She looks at LARRY in bewilderment.)

Larry, are you *visualizing* now too?

LARRY

(He turns to look at her through his finger frame.)

No, I'm working on the choreography for when we act this out later.

MS. CHADWICK

Of course...I should have realized...

(She turns to PENELOPE.)

So Penelope...is there anything else I need to know...is this little production of yours a musical? Maybe we can get Mr. Simons to bring the marching band by so we can learn about the writing of the Star Spangled Banner?

PENELOPE

(She just sits there at a loss for words.)

SCENE 8: ...the Fall.

*(SETTING: Ms. Chadwick's Classroom.
ALEX, WALTER and HAROLD are the only ones in the room.
ALEX is studying his history book, while WALTER and
HAROLD are looking at the scripts PENELOPE gave them.
ENTER: PENELOPE, she walks over to join the JOCKS.)*

PENELOPE

Hi guys, where's everyone else?

WALTER

You've got me.

PENELOPE

Alex?

ALEX

(He keeps studying without even looking up.)

PENELOPE

(Loudly.)

ALEX!

ALEX

(He looks up frowning with irritation.)

What?!

PENELOPE

Did you say or do anything that would explain why Sam and the others aren't here?

ALEX

No, why would I do that?

PENELOPE

Well...it's just that sometimes, you can come across a little...*harsh*.

ALEX

What? That's a bunch of baloney! I'm the nicest guy I know.

(He turns to WALTER and HAROLD.)

Guys, tell her what a great friend I am.

WALTER AND HAROLD

(They look uncomfortably from ALEX to each other.)

ALEX

Well I am!

PENELOPE

All I'm saying is that you might have accidentally slipped and called them names...like geeks...or losers...or something like that.

ALEX

Ummm...nope, I don't think so. But even if I did, so what?

(He turns to WALTER.)

We call them stuff like that all the time. I don't really think it's a big deal at this point.

HAROLD

It's a big deal.

ALEX

Whatever, I don't remember saying anything.

(He holds up his history book.)

In fact, I've had my nose in this stupid book all day. I doubt I've said more than two words to anyone.

WALTER

(Laughing.)

I'll vouch for that. He even took it to gym class. I thought coach was going to go through the roof.

PENELOPE

Well then, where is everyone?

(ENTER: DARRELL, who walks hesitantly through the door with his hands behind his back, hiding something from the others.)

WALTER

Here comes one of them now.

(EVERYONE turns to watch DARRELL, who is visibly troubled, as he joins the group.)

PENELOPE

Is everything alright, Darrell?

DARRELL

Ahhh, yeah, sorry I'm late...I was...ahhh...doing something...else.

ALEX

Wow! That certainly clears things up!

PENELOPE

(She gives ALEX a disapproving look.)

Don't worry about it, we're just getting started.

(She pauses.)

I don't suppose you know where everyone else is?

DARRELL

(He shuffles his feet and sways back and forth.)

Ummm...yeah...well...they're...ahhh...

(He takes a deep breath and blurts out.)

...they aren't coming!

PENELOPE

Aren't coming? Today...or do you mean ever?

DARRELL

(He starts rapidly nodding his head.)

Yes...they aren't...

(He switches to rapidly shaking his head, still shuffling.)

...I mean, no...they're not.

PENELOPE

I don't understand. I made it so easy for everyone. All they have to do is follow the scripts I handed out.

(Beat.)

Did they say *why* they're not coming?

DARRELL

(Looks pained and holds out SAM'S wadded up script.)

Ahhh...Sam said I was supposed to give this to you.

PENELOPE

(She reaches out, takes the paper and unfolds it.)

Oh! I think I'm beginning to understand.

(She sighs.)

What about Larry?

DARRELL

(He brings out his other hand and holds out LARRY'S script, which is neatly folded into an origami cube.)

PENELOPE

I see...and what about your other friend...I'm sorry, I should, but I can't remember his name...

ALEX

(He interjects.)

Loon.

PENELOPE

(She's getting agitated.)

I meant his real name.

HAROLD

His name is Norman.

PENELOPE

Thank you, Harold

(She looks back to DARRELL.)

What about Norman, did he have a *gift* for me too?

DARRELL

No...he wanted to keep his paper...he said it smelled nice.

(ALEX and WALTER both burst out laughing.)

ALEX

(He mimes holding up a paper and sniffing it.)

Oh...it smells soooooo fragrant...just like Penelope!

PENELOPE

(She gives ALEX and WALTER a withering look.)

What's so funny? A lot of girls use scented paper.

ALEX

Relax. Miss Prickly, we weren't laughing at you.

(He turns to WALTER and shakes his head.)

Geeks, just when you think they can't get any weirder, along comes Loon.

PENELOPE

What a horrible thing to say!

ALEX

Settle down, sister. We're not the ones raining on your little parade. That would be the *geeks* you're so concerned about.

PENELOPE

Stop that! They've got real names you know.

ALEX

Hey, that's just the way it is. Don't you get it...we call Loon, Loon...because he's *Loony*.

(He draws a circle around one ear with an index finger.)

PENELOPE

No, I don't get it. He's shy, but so are a lot of people.

ALEX

Shy?! No one has ever heard that kid speak out loud.

(He points to DARRELL.)

All he does is whisper in Spaz's ear, so Spaz can speak for him. It's like a bizarre ventriloquist act, with a mute dummy.

(He turns to WALTER.)

Isn't that the way you described it, Walt?

WALTER

(He looks down uncomfortably and remains silent.)

ALEX

Hey, don't you go all goody-two-shoes on me, teammate. Remember you were the one who started calling him Loon in the first place. I was just going to call him *Little Goon* when...

(He hooks a thumb toward HAROLD.)

...*Big Goon* here joined the football team. *You were the one who pointed out that he was crazy as a loon.*

WALTER

(He's very embarrassed.)

Yeah, I remember.

ALEX

(Points at DARRELL.)

Come to think of it, you nicknamed Spaz too...

DARRELL

(He looks at WALTER with a hurt expression.)

ALEX

(Laughs.)

...and that would be the day Spaz tried to dribble a basketball.

PENELOPE

(She interjects vehemently.)

A lot of people have trouble dribbling a basketball!

ALEX

Right, but how many of them look like they're having a seizure while they're doing it?

(He mimes dribbling while flailing his arms and legs.)

PENELOPE

I think you're exaggerating more than a little bit, Alex.

ALEX

Oh Come on, you've seen him. Anytime he just gets called on in class...he just spazzes out.

(He laughs.)

If you want a real laugh, watch what happens when a girl tries to talk to him.

PENELOPE

That's ridiculous...

(She looks at DARRELL who is twitching uncomfortably.)

...I talk to Darrell all the time.

ALEX

And he spazzes out all the time...you just don't notice it anymore. Just see what happens when you *really* talk to him. Go on, give him a compliment...tell him how nice he looks or something.

DARRELL

(He goes from uncomfortably squirming, to almost panicked.)

PENELOPE

(She glares at ALEX and retorts.)

You are so mean sometimes. Just because Darrell isn't hung up on himself like *some* people...

(She turns to DARRELL and speaks gently.)

And by the way, you do look very nice today, Darrell.

(DARRELL comes completely unglued by PENELOPE'S compliment; he starts to visibly shake while blinking uncontrollably, his mouth starts to open and shut with nothing but grunts and gasps coming out. Finally, in full panic, he races off. EXIT: DARRELL. ALEX laughs uncontrollably while PENELOPE, WALTER and HAROLD look distressed.)

ALEX

I rest my case.

(WALTER glares at ALEX, then starts to walk purposefully after DARRELL.)

ALEX

Hey, where are you going?

WALTER

(He calls back without stopping.)

I'm going to go look for my self-respect. I think it just ran out the door.

ALEX

What's that supposed to mean? You know, Walter, the problem with always being the funny guy, is that other people don't always get what you're saying.

WALTER

(He stops, glares back angrily.)

Yeah I know...you *don't* get it. Maybe I should give you a nickname too. But, you know what, the ones that come to mind wouldn't be proper to say with Penelope in the room.

(EXIT: WALTER, he storms out.)

ALEX

F-I-N-E...Whatever.

(He turns to PENELOPE.)

Your little study group seems to be disintegrating.

PENELOPE

My study group? Alex, we're only here because of you.

ALEX

Sure, if you say so. But let's get on with it, some of us have lives to live...

(He looks to HAROLD for support.)

...isn't that right, big fella?

(HAROLD glares silently then stalks out.
EXIT: HAROLD.)

ALEX

The whole world's gone crazy. Well, I guess it's just you and me, God girl, unless you're going to walk out too.

PENELOPE

No...

(She glances upward.)

...I promised I'd see this through.

(She starts looking through her scripts.)

Okay, how about we start with the Pony Express?

ALEX

Actually, since it's just the two of us, let's do it the way SAM showed me today.

PENELOPE

Sam? Sam showed you a new way to study today?

ALEX

Yip. All you have to do is read...

(He hands her his book and makes his binoculars.)

...and I'll visualize. This actually works almost as well as the way Sam had us act it out yesterday.

PENELOPE

Well then, if Sam says so, I guess we'd better do it.

(She sighs, lowers the book and looks upward.)

But how about we start with a word of prayer first?

ALEX

Do we still need to do that with the others gone?

PENELOPE

Alex, I'm pretty sure that out of everyone, you and I are the ones who need prayer the most right now.

(ALEX gives a "whatever" shrug and PENELOPE bows her head to pray.)

SCENE 9: Your Will be Done.

*(SETTING: Ms. Chadwick's Classroom. SAM and a few other STUDENTS are sitting at their desks.
ENTER: PENELOPE, who hurries over to SAM.)*

SAM

(He looks up at PENELOPE with a wry smile.)
What, you couldn't wait until lunch time to yell at me?

PENELOPE

Could we *not* be mean to each other?

SAM

Well, I wouldn't put big odds on it, but I guess we can try.

(He smiles again.)

Go ahead, I can't wait to hear how you chew me out nicely.

PENELOPE

I'm not going to chew you out. I'm here to apologize. I've just been feeling terrible since yesterday.

SAM

(He looks a little puzzled but remains silent.)

PENELOPE

Well...?

SAM

Well what?

PENELOPE

Aren't you going to say something?

SAM

I'm still waiting to hear you apologize.

PENELOPE

I just did.

SAM

No...you *said* you came here to apologize...but I haven't heard one yet.

PENELOPE

Yes it did...I *said* I feel terrible about *yesterday*.

SAM

Yesterday could cover soooo many things.

PENELOPE

Alright, I guess I deserved that. I will do my best to keep our agreement to be nice to each other.

(She takes a breath.)

I'm sorry I gave you the script...and that I didn't listen when you tried to tell me it was a bad idea.

SAM

Is that all?

PENELOPE

(She looks frustrated but maintains her composure.)

Actually, noooo, it's not. The thing I'm sorriest about is that I was so selfish that I ruined the chance we all had to work together and maybe even become friends.

(She looks at SAM pointedly.)

There, are you satisfied now?

SAM

Well, I guess that'll do for a start.

(He becomes serious.)

I'm sorry too.

PENELOPE

For what?

SAM

Pretty much the same stuff you just said. When things weren't going the way I wanted, I got mad and walked out.

PENELOPE

(Teasingly.)

Is that all?

SAM

Now that you mention it...I'm *really* sorry I didn't tell you what a hair brained idea your scripts were in the first place.

PENELOPE

You tried, I just wouldn't listen.

(She looks upward.)

I'm pretty good at that. *If only I had listened!*

SAM

(He waves a hand dismissingly.)

Don't worry about it, that's all water under the bridge.

PENELOPE

How can you say that?

SAM

What...we're good right?

PENELOPE

Yeah, I guess we are.

(She frowns again.)

But that doesn't mean that Alex won't be tarred and feathered before the day is over.

SAM

Did I miss something?

PENELOPE

Just the start of Lincoln High's version of World War III. The only history we *studied* yesterday afternoon was Alex explaining in graphic detail how Darrell and Norman got their horrible nicknames.

(Beat.)

He also managed to make Walter and Harold so mad I'm not sure they'll ever talk to him again.

SAM

(He chuckles.)

Sounds like quite a show, sorry I missed it.

PENELOPE

It's not funny. They'll never agree to get back together again now.

SAM

Don't be so sure. These are *guys* we're talking about. We're not in the same league as you ladies when it comes to holding a grudge.

PENELOPE

Ha-ha, very funny.

SAM

I'm only half kidding. Seriously, we just don't have much of an attention span for things like that. I'd be surprised if any of them even remember that it happened...

(He holds up his hands and smiles.)

...look how quick I got over being mad at you.

PENELOPE

That's sweet, but can we really expect the others to be as feeble minded as you are?

SAM

We can only hope.

(SFX: Bell rings. More STUDENTS start filing into the room and taking their seats.)

ENTER: ALEX, who ambles over his desk and immediately sticks his nose in his book.

ENTER: WALTER and HAROLD; THEY greet SAM and PENELOPE warmly then glare at ALEX before sitting down.

ENTER: THE GEEKS; they look straight ahead until they come abreast of ALEX, then, in unison, they glance down at him disdainfully, before abruptly turning their heads away to march by and sit down.)

PENELOPE

So much for your theory.

SAM

You just focus on Walter and Harold, I'll make sure Alex and the Geeks are there.

PENELOPE

I can't believe you just called them that.

SAM

Calm down, it's just a stupid nickname. I'm a geek too...

(He points at ALEX.)

...and Alex here is a dumb jock...right Alex?

ALEX

(Without looking up, he gives a distracted answer.)

Yeah sure, whatever you say, SAM.

SAM

See, it's no big deal

PENELOPE

Yes, it is! At least to some people.

(She points at THE GEEKS, who are all still glaring.)
If you don't believe me, go ask them!

SAM

Okay, okay, I get it.

(He makes a shooing motion to PENELOPE.)

Now go, run along, class is about to begin.

*(PENELOPE frowns, then walks to her desk.
ENTER: MS. CHADWICK; bustling in as usual
with an arm full of papers. She hurries to
the front of the classroom to address the
students.)*

MS. CHADWICK

Good morning everyone.

*(THE STUDENTS give half-hearted greetings as
they finish opening their books.)*

PENELOPE

(She puts her hand in the air and speaks.)

Ms. Chadwick, can I say something before we get started?

MS. CHADWICK

Yes Penelope, what is it?

PENELOPE

I want to apologize for yesterday...you're a wonderful
teacher and I hope you can forgive me for being so rude.

MS. CHADWICK

I'm afraid I can't do that, Penelope...

(She lets her words hang for a moment.)

...because there is *nothing* to forgive. You were right, learning should be interesting and fun. And, with that in mind...

(She holds up the sheaf of papers.)

These are transcripts of the original radio broadcasts that went out when they announced the formation of the United Nations.

(She looks out over the classroom.)

Now, I need volunteers to play FDR, Winston Churchill, and Newsman Edward R. Murrow. Can I get any volunteers?

(The classroom erupts with activity as the students, especially THE GEEKS, throw their hands in the air and plead their case to be called upon.)

SCENE 10: Sticks and Stones...

(SETTING: Ms. Chadwick's Classroom.)

WALTER and HAROLD are alone in the classroom waiting for the OTHERS to show up.)

HAROLD

I don't get it. Why are we here?

WALTER

I already told you...because Penelope asked us to.

HAROLD

So...she's the one who stirred things up in the first place.

WALTER

You know, for a smart kid, you're pretty dumb sometimes.

HAROLD

(Beat.)

You know, for someone who's supposed to be a good guy, you sure call people names a lot.

WALTER

You're right...but you also just made my point. Penny's not the problem here...we are.

(Beat.)

You don't see her calling anyone names...or acting like she's better than everyone else, do you?

HAROLD

(He gives WALTER a "whatever" look.)

WALTER

But the biggest reason we're here is because if any of us asked her for something...and I mean just about anything...no matter how hard, or how much she didn't want to do it...she'd be there for us!

HAROLD

(He considers for a moment, then shrugs.)

Maybe.

WALTER

You can't tell me that you liked the way we were treating your old pals before she...*stirred things up*?

HAROLD

No, I've never liked it...and now, I don't even want to be around Alex anymore.

WALTER

I hear you, but we wouldn't be feeling this way if Penelope hadn't come along and made us take a good hard look at ourselves.

HAROLD

(He gets a thoughtful expression and nods agreement.)

(ENTER: ALEX, who nonchalantly strolls up to WALTER and HAROLD.)

ALEX

Where's everybody else?

(WALTER and HAROLD just stand there silently glowering at ALEX.)

ALEX

(He's suddenly angry, he addresses WALTER.)
Dude, what's your problem?! If this is about the thing with Spaz yesterday, get over it...it's old news!

WALTER

Oh really...
(He snaps his fingers.)
...it's over, just like that?

ALEX

Yeah...
(He snaps his own fingers.)
...just like that!

(He shakes his head.)
Seriously, what's the big deal? I didn't even do anything to the little twerp this time. Not like last week when I stuffed him in a locker. I seem to remember you laughing harder than anyone then.

WALTER

Well, I'm not laughing now.

ALEX

Fine, whatever.

(ENTER: SAM and THE GEEKS. LARRY, DARRELL, and NORMAN are walking shoulder-to-shoulder. As they come in, THE GEEKS in unison; stop just inside the door; turn their heads to glare at ALEX; cross their arms; lean back; cock their heads to the side; and sneer. SAM continues into the room without realizing the GEEKS have stopped.)

SAM

Hey guys, how's it going?

ALEX

(He's pouting, shrugs without looking up.)

WALTER

We're getting by.

(He notices the GEEKS, nods in their direction.)

What's up with your boys, Sam?

SAM

(He looks back at THE GEEKS, then waves them over.)

Come on, get over here.

(In unison, THE GEEKS look from ALEX to SAM; then back to ALEX; then do a pronounced head shake and go back to glaring at ALEX.)

SAM

Well, at least they're here.

(ENTER: PENELOPE; who in her rush almost collides with THE GEEKS as she hurries over to join SAM and THE JOCKS.)

PENELOPE

(She pauses to catch her breath, then innocently asks.)

Have you started already?

SAM

Ahhh...not exactly.

PENELOPE

(She's still clueless.)

Well, that's okay. Why don't we start with something fun...how about the Wright brother's first flight.

(She looks at ALEX.)

Alex, why don't you be Wilbur...

ALEX

Sure, whatever.

PENELOPE

...and Walter, you can be Orville.

WALTER

I don't think so...

(He nods at ALEX.)

...he's no brother of mine.

PENELOPE

Oookay...

(She turns to HAROLD.)

...Harold, how would you like to be Orville?

HAROLD

(He looks at her and slowly, deliberately shakes his head.)

PENELOPE

(She looks around and gets a clue, sighs and continues.)
Alright then...

(She looks at SAM.)

I thought you said there was nothing to worry about?

SAM

No...I said don't worry, we'll get them here...

(He holds up his hands to indicate the others presence.)
...well...they're here!

PENELOPE

Thanks, you're loads of help.

(She ponders for several moments before speaking.)

Well, we didn't come here to stand around and stare at each other...so, Walter, if you don't want to be Orville Wright, what would you like to do?

WALTER

I'm good with anything...as long as it's not with *him*.

PENELOPE

Alright...

(She looks to HAROLD.)

HAROLD

Yep, that sounds about right.

PENELOPE

(She turns to look at THE GEEKS.)

LARRY

Dit-to!

DARRELL

Dit-to!

NORMAN

(Nods adamantly.)

PENELOPE

Well then, I guess we'll just go ahead and leave Alex completely out of everything we do.

(WALTER, HAROLD and THE GEEKS all nod in happy agreement.)

PENELOPE

No! That's exactly what we are *not* going to do. We're all in this together! We're supposed to be a team!

(She looks around at the group.)

I know you're all upset at Alex, but I'm sure he's sorry for what he did...

(She looks pointedly at ALEX.)

...and would be willing to apologize for it.

ALEX

(He frowns, crosses his arms and shakes his head.)

I don't have anything to be sorry about!

(Everyone stares at ALEX in disbelief.)

LARRY

(He's amped up; he rushes forward.)

I beg to disagree! Forget about the past ten years of tyranny...let's just review some of yesterday's atrocities.

(He holds up a hand to count off offenses.)

First period...you called Darrell and I dweebs, *while* knocking Norman's books out of his hand.

ALEX

I didn't tell you to stand in the middle of the hallway.

LARRY

Second period...you added soda pop to my science project, potato chips to Darrell's, and gum to Norman's.

ALEX

No need to thank me.

LARRY

Third period...*GYM CLASS*...you repeatedly spiked each of us in the face with a volleyball. You hit me four times, Norman five, and Darrell nine!

ALEX

(Looks around and says proudly.)

I'll have you know, a lot of those were on the run...and left handed!

PENELOPE

Alex, you could have hurt someone!

ALEX

(He waves a hand dismissingly.)

Don't listen to Whiny Willy...that's why they call it *dodge ball*. Getting hit is part of the game.

LARRY

Again with the name calling!

ALEX

Sticks and stones may break my bones but names will never hurt me!

DARRELL

(Rushes in.)

That's easy for you to say...nobody ever calls you a geek...

(He does his usual gyrations and nervous twitching.)
...or weirdo...or freakaziod...

(He fights to get the words out.)

...it's not...it's not nice at all!

NORMAN

(He runs forward, nodding his head in agreement.)

LARRY

Yeah Alex, how would you like it if everyone started calling you names?

ALEX

(Laughing.)

Bring it on, genius.

PENELOPE

Guys, that's not going to help anything. Returning evil for evil never works out. If someone strikes us on one cheek, you're supposed to turn the other for him to strike as well.

DARRELL

(He runs a hand across one cheek then the other.)

I don't have to turn my head for him to do that.

PENELOPE

But you know what I mean...

SAM

(He steps in, cutting PENELOPE off.)

I don't know, a little name calling might be just the ticket.

PENELOPE

(She gives SAM a look of TOTAL disbelief.)

SAM

Hey, if I'm wrong, think of all the fun you'll have saying I told you so.

PENELOPE

You're incorrigible.

SAM

(He smiles and addresses THE GEEKS.)
Okay fellas, let him have it.

ALEX

(He holds up his hands and makes a "bring it on" motion.)

LARRY

(He mimes pushing up one sleeve, then the other, rotates his head around and sticks out his chin.)
Loooooser!

ALEX

(He does a fake flinch.)
Ewww...that hurt.

DARRELL

You're...you're ahhh...ahhh...you're not as smart as a lot of other people!

ALEX

(He looks confused, starts to say something, then just shrugs and looks at NORMAN to see what's next.)

NORMAN

(He stands silently frowning with a look of concentration.)

LARRY

You're a Pigmy brained Neanderthal...
(He gets a worried look and explains.)
...that's not to infer of course that Pigmy's have small brains. My use of the word Pigmy was simply to insert an adjective to convey the idea that the size of Alex's brain relative to other peoples...

SAM

(Cuts him off.)
We get it, Larry.

DARRELL

Hyper egocentric, morally divergent, socio neophyte!

ALEX

(He just gets a confused look.)

LARRY

(He's starting to sound desperate.)
Muscle bound jock.

ALEX

(He slowly waggles head back and forth and holds up his hands, somewhat acknowledging the barb.)

(WALTER and HAROLD look on with disgusted expressions while LARRY goes into rapid fire mode, shouting out one insult after another. ALEX looks at LARRY like he almost wants him to have some success.)

LARRY

Numbskull...halfwit...low watt lunatic...meathead...barf breath...noodle nose...

DARRELL

(He looks to NORMAN with bewilderment.)
Noodle nose?

NORMAN

(He shrugs and goes back to studying ALEX intently.)

LARRY

(He sucks in a deep breath and continues.)
...soda slurper...jelly belly...elephant ears...dizzy dunce...

PENELOPE

Okay, Larry, I think that's enough.

LARRY

But it hasn't done any good yet! It just bounces off of him like he's got insult repellent Kevlar on.

PENELOPE

(Turns to SAM.)

Can I say I told you so now?

SAM

Actually, I think I made my point...

(He addresses THE GEEKS.)

Name calling is really pretty lame...*if you don't let it bother you.*

LARRY

Sure, that's easy for you to say, but try putting up with it your whole life.

(Beat.)

Especially when the names are just a prelude to punching, kicking and wedgies.

(Before SAM can respond, NORMAN, who is looking very determined, waves his arms vigorously to get EVERYONE'S attention. He then leans over and whispers to DARRELL.)

DARRELL

(Shrugs and nods.)

Norman has a name he would like to call Alex.

ALEX

(Laughing.)

Sorry, I don't read lips.

DARRELL

Ahhh...actually...he wants me...to, ahhh...do it for him.

ALEX

Well, of course he does. Bring it on, Spaz.

DARRELL

(He's nervous and mumbles something inaudible.)

(EVERYONE looks at DARRELL expectantly. NORMAN gives DARRELL a solid nudge for motivation.)

DARRELL

(He gathers himself and speaks clearly to ALEX.)
Shirley.

ALEX

What?

DARRELL

(He's looking and sounding determined now.)
Shirley!

ALEX

(He sounds irritated but still confused.)
I heard what you said, moron, what's it supposed to mean?

NORMAN

(He nods and gives DARRELL another nudge.)

DARRELL

(Deep breath.)

Shirley is Norman's little sister's name.

(Beat.)

Norman says you throw the football just like Shirley...*like a little girl!*

ALEX

(With false bravado.)

That's ridiculous...I have the best arm in the state and everyone knows it!

DARRELL

But Norman says you...*look...*just like Shirley, when you throw.

(He mimes a disjointed, loose wristed throwing motion.)

LARRY

(Senses blood in the water.)

Shirley!

ALEX

(He gives LARRY a threatening glare.)

DARRELL

(He gets a look of wonder and speaks the word reverently.)
S-h-i-r-l-e-y.

LARRY

Shi-rrrrrrrrrr-ley!

DARRELL

Sh-sh-sh-shirly.

NORMAN

(He thrusts out his chin as if to say "Shirley too.")

LARRY

(He puts his hands on hips and wiggles them around.)
Shirley girly!

DARRELL

(He puts his hands on hips and does a hula motion.)
G-girly Shirley.

NORMAN

(He puts his hands on hips, wiggles them around, then does
a double chin thrust.)

ALEX

(He's smoking hot but trying to sound cool.)
Alright already, that one's getting old, try something new.

WALTER

(He turns to HAROLD.)
You know, I think they're on to something. He is kind of a
pretty boy, don't you think, Harold?

HAROLD

(He nods his head in exaggerated agreement.)

WALTER

What do you think, Penn, could you use another cheerleader
on the squad? I'll bet Alex would look great in one of your
little outfits.

ALEX

You're way across the line, teammate!

WALTER

I'm just sayin'...if the whole quarterback thing doesn't
work out for you...*sister*, you've got options!

ALEX

(He jumps up from his desk and starts toward WALTER.)

PENELOPE

(She quickly steps in and keeps ALEX and WALTER apart.)
Alright, that's enough!

(She addresses everyone but targets ALEX.)
Hopefully, everyone can see how childish name calling is.

(Her tone becomes sweetly menacing.)
Now, are we ready to get to work, or do I need to duct tape
all your mouths shut and do this myself?

(EVERYONE slowly nods their agreement.)

PENELOPE

Okay then...Alex, you know you're part and Walter, you'll be Orville Wright.

WALTER

(With feigned seriousness and a big smile.)
I didn't know Orville had a sister.

PENELOPE

(She gives a disapproving smile and shakes her head.)

SCENE 11: All Together Now...Almost.

*(SETTING: Ms. Chadwick's Classroom.
LARRY, DARRELL, NORMAN, ALEX, WALTER, and HAROLD are
grouped at center stage. LARRY and DARRELL are having
a heated debate while the others look on with
interest.)*

LARRY

(He gets wide eyed and dramatically puts hands on head.)
You can't be serious...you-believe-in-God?!

DARRELL

That's *not* exactly what I said.

LARRY

Whatever...anytime someone says things were *designed*
instead of *evolved*, that's what it really means.

DARRELL

All I said was that the *theory* of evolution fails in a
number of areas when it comes to simple "if-then"
equations.

LARRY

(Highly agitated.)

For example?!

DARRELL

(Calmly and quickly rattles off.)

The human eye, bird bones and feathers, caterpillar to
butterfly metamorphosis, gills becoming lungs...and of course
the entire DNA super engine with its hyper-sophisticated
language...to name a few.

LARRY

(He excitedly waves his hand, thumb up, in DARRELL'S face.)
Oh yeah, well let me tell you something...if we didn't
evolve an opposable thumb so we could throw rocks and
sticks we'd still be living up in trees!

DARRELL

I didn't say anything about opposable thumbs.

LARRY

RIGHT! That's because you were afraid to!

DARRELL

(Looks puzzled.)

So, how did *your* ancestors get up into those trees if they didn't already have an opposable thumb?

LARRY

(He glares at DARRELL without answering.)

(ENTER: PENELOPE and SAM. THEY walk over and join the others.)

PENELOPE

Hi everybody. What's going on?

WALTER

The boys here were just having a friendly little chat about evolution.

(He turns to LARRY.)

Hey man, if you want to say your great grandfather was a monkey, you've got my full support. In fact, if you wanna claim you came straight from pond scum, I've got your back, brother, vertebrae or no vertebrae.

LARRY

Thanks, Walter, that means a lot to me.

PENELOPE

(She gives WALTER a disapproving look.)

As interesting as all that sounds...we've got a lot of ground to cover.

(She looks around.)

Now, if I remember right, we were just about to dig the Panama Canal.

HAROLD

(He holds up a push broom.)

I've got my shovel.

NORMAN

(He proudly holds up a small regular broom.)

(ENTER: VINNIE, MISTY, and RITA. THEY come a short ways into the room and stop.)

VINNIE

See, what did I tell you? She's got them all lined up, jumping through hoops like some weird circus act.

MISTY

What's so weird, they're just standing around talking together?

VINNIE

Did you *listen* to yourself? Those are jocks and geeks over there. They're not supposed to be *talking together!* It's like seeing a cat and a canary holding hands.

MISTY

Cats and birds don't have hands.

VINNIE

You know what I mean, girl.

MISTY

Well, I still don't see what the big deal is.

VINNIE

(He looks to RITA for support.)

RITA

I have to admit, it is kind of odd.

VINNIE

Kind of?!

PENELOPE

(She turns to see what the commotion is.)

Hey guys, I'm glad you're here, come on over and join us.

MISTY

(She brightens and starts to walk forward.)

VINNIE

(HE grabs MISTY'S arm and pulls her abruptly back.)

Slow down, Bo Peep, those aren't your sheep.

(He forces a smile as he addresses PENELOPE.)

Thanks, but we're just fine over here.

PENELOPE

Misty, we really could use your help.

MISTY

Really?!

(She starts toward PENELOPE again.)

VINNIE

(He jerks MISTY back again.)

Like I said...we'll just hang out over here for now!

LARRY

Dude, that ain't cool, let the lady make up her own mind.

VINNIE

(He's instantly hot.)

Watch your mouth, geek boy, no one asked your opinion.

(LARRY starts into his spastic karate stance routine but ALEX stands up and puts a hand on his shoulder.)

ALEX

His name isn't geek boy, Vinnie...it's Larry.

VINNIE

(He reacts like he's been slapped.)

Excuse me...did you really just take his side over mine?!

ALEX

I don't want to take anyone's side, Vinnie. Trust me, it's a lot better if there aren't any sides.

VINNIE

Man, I don't even know who you are.

ALEX

Right, I get that...

(He holds out a welcoming hand.)

...so maybe you should come on over here and get to know me...

(He pats LARRY on the shoulder.)

...get to know all of us.

VINNIE

That's crazy...

(He stabs an accusing finger at ALEX.)

...you're crazy!

WALTER

(He holds his arms out wide to VINNIE.)
Come on over here, Vinnie man, and give me a big old hug.

VINNIE

(He points at WATLER.)
You've *always* been crazy!
(He turns to RITA and MISTY.)
Let's go Ladies. I've seen enough of this freak show.

MISTY

(She looks in confusion from VINNIE to RITA.)

RITA

I don't think so...
(She studies ALEX with a perplexed expression.)
...I'm going to hang here with Dorothy and her friends for a while, at least until I figure out how she managed to give Alex both a heart *and* a brain.

VINNIE

Suit yourself, but you just might find out she's really the Wicked Witch...*after* she casts a spell on you too.

RITA

Sugar...there's only one Wicked Witch around here and don't you forget it, or...
(She points at NORMAN who is still holding the broom.)
...I'll have that young man bring my ride over here and give you a little dusting off with it.

NORMAN

(He looks nervously from RITA down to the broom in his hands, then tries to nonchalantly hide it behind his back.)

VINNIE

Fine, but I'm out of here. You all have a nice day!

(EXIT: VINNIE.)

WALTER

(He smiles and waves.)
Okay, bye, bye now.

PENELOPE

W-a-l-t-e-r...

(She turns to RITA and MISTY.)

Come on ladies, since you're here, you might as well help us out. There were a lot of important women in history and I can't do them all.

MISTY

Yea...we get to act! Can I be the princess?

RITA

Trust me, Sweetie, you've always been the princess.

PENELOPE

Actually, Misty, we don't have any princess parts...but we do need someone to play Amelia Earhart, and she was known as the Queen of the Air.

MISTY

(She claps her hands.)

Okay, goody!

PENELOPE

And there's Eleanor Roosevelt, she was one of the most intelligent, powerful women the world has ever known...

RITA

(She puts her hands on her hips and her chin in the air.)
That would be me.

PENELOPE

Okay then, come on, let's get started...

(EVERYONE except RITA and MISTY bow their heads in unison as PENELOPE starts to pray. Misty looks a little confused for a moment then smiles and bows her head too. RITA shakes her head but eventually bows too.)

PENELOPE

Father, I want to thank You for bringing us all...

(She pauses to give a quick glance at the empty doorway.)
...almost all of us here together.

(Pause.)

Lord, help us to be a light in all that we do...

ACT III

SCENE 12: Finish the Race.

(SETTING: Center stage under the spotlight. This scene begins with a series of vignettes played out in rapid succession to show the passage of time leading up to the day of the test.)

(1st Vignette: ONE GIANT STEP. NORMAN is standing on the second step of a stepladder wearing a motorcycle helmet. HAROLD is standing to the side of NORMAN and will assist him to simulate the lower moon gravity by lifting him down from the ladder and helping him to moon hop across the stage as WALTER reads.

WALTER

(SFX: Off Stage, using "radio voice").
That's one small step for man and one giant leap for mankind!

(2nd Vignette: LEWIS AND CLARK. ALEX is standing with his left fist on his hip and his right up shielding his eyes from the imaginary sun. SAM and MISTY walk on stage and join him.

SAM

What are you looking at, Lewis?

ALEX

We've got problems, Clark
(He points out and downward.)

SAM

(He carefully leans out over an imaginary cliff.)
My, my, that's one deep canyon.

ALEX

(He deadpans.)
Yes, you might even say...it's *grand!* But how are we ever going to get across it?

SAM

Well, we could wait here ninety-nine years until the Wright brothers invent the airplane, then fly across it...

ALEX

(He gives SAM a disapproving look.)

SAM

...or, we could head north and tell President Jefferson...

(He hooks a thumb at MISTY.)

...Sacajawea here got us lost. No one will ever know we were here.

(ALEX and SAM give each other a "thumbs-up" while MISTY frowns at them.)

(3rd Vignette: BABE RUTH'S CALLED SHOT. DARRELL, with his usual amount of twitches and jerks, is standing at an imaginary home plate vigorously wagging an imaginary bat (NOTE: he's facing the audience, batting left handed).

LARRY

(SFX: Off Stage, using "Broadcaster Voice".)

"Here we are ladies and gentlemen...it's game three of the 1932 world series between the New York Yankees and the Chicago Cubs. We're in the top of the fifth inning and Babe Ruth is at the plate, facing a count of two balls and one strike against him. Ruth and the Yankee's put the Cubs in a deep hole in the early innings, but the Cubbies have fought their way back into it...

(Pause).

...and here's the pitch...striiiiikkke two, called by the umpire.

DARRELL

(Turns to give the imaginary umpire a dirty look.)

LARRY

Ruth doesn't like that call one bit...he's glaring at the ump, now he's yelling at the players on the Cubbies bench...

DARRELL

(Turns and looks to his left.)
Your mother wears army boots!

LARRY

Wait...what's this...what's the Babe doing now?!

DARRELL

(He points up in the air, over the audience.)

LARRY

I don't believe it...I think Ruth just told the Cubs bench that he's going to...wait, here comes the pitch.

DARRELL

(He takes a big, exaggerated swing.)

(SFX: Loud crack sound, timed to DARRELL'S swing.)

LARRY

He's done it. Babe Ruth's done it. He's just knocked the ball completely out of the stadium, right at the spot where he'd pointed just moments before!

DARRELL

(He watches the ball, drops his "bat", and trots off.)

(4th Vignette: THERE'S GOLD IN THEM THAR HILLS. PENELOPE and SAM are standing close together at CS.)

SAM

(He drops to one knee and takes PENELOPE'S hand.)
Clementine, I know what a disappointment I've been, but give me one more chance to make it up to you. I may not have any money, or a job...or even my horse and saddle since I hocked them. But you know I love you, Clementine. Say you'll marry me and I'll spend the rest of my life working to making you happy.

PENELOPE

(She takes a deep sigh and speaks with a southern drawl.)

Oh Percy, I know daddy will be furious, but I have to follow my heart. So, yes, Percy dear, my answer is yes, yes, yes...

RITA

(She rushes up, wide eyed with excitement and interrupts.)
There's gold in them thar' hills! Gold I tell ya', they're findin' nuggets big as goose eggs and plenty as the stars in the sky. There's gold for any that's a mind to get it and more than enough to be had. There's gold, gold, gold in them thar' hills!

(She rushes back offstage.)

SAM

(He looks back at PENELOPE and holds up a finger.)
Hold that thought...

(SAM swivels around and scurries off after Rita, leaving PENELOPE with an astonished look on her face.)

*(5th Vignette: And That's Progress?
PENELOPE is at CS sitting in a chair miming writing a letter.
ENTER: LARRY, who hurries up to PENELOPE.)*

LARRY

Put down that pen...I've got great news! It's 1835, I'm Samuel Morse, and I've just invented the telegraph.

PENELOPE

What's a telegraph?

LARRY

What's a telegraph? I'll tell you what it is, it's the future...

(He waves a hand in a big arch in front of him.)
...forget about waiting weeks or even months for that letter from your loved ones. Let me demonstrate.

(He takes PENELOPE'S "letter" and reads it out loud.)
My Dearest Percy, oh how I long to hear from you...

(Starts miming tapping a telegraph key while speaking.)
Dash dash, dash dot dash dash, dot dash dash dot, dot...

PENELOPE

(She snatches her "letter" back and asks incredulously.)

Dash dash dot dot? Why on earth would anyone want to trade the elegance and intimacy of the written word for gibberish like that?

LARRY

Why...I'll tell you why...BECAUSE THAT'S PROGRESS!

(He points his finger in the air dramatically.)

(PENELOPE shakes her head, gets up and EXITS. LARRY sits down mimes using a telegraph. ENTER: HAROLD, who excitedly approaches LARRY.)

HAROLD

Stop that infernal racket...I've got great news! It's 1876, I'm Alexander Graham Bell, and I've just invented the telephone.

LARRY

(He looks up with a perturbed expression.)

What's a telephone?

HAROLD

What's a telephone? I'll tell you what it is...it's the future...

(He waves a hand in a big arch in front of him.)

...forget about relying on a series of archaic dots and dashes to convey your thoughts and ideas. Soon every home in America will have its very own telephone and you'll be able to call and talk to anyone, anytime you want to. Let me demonstrate...

(He mimes picking up a phone and speaking into it.)

Watson, come here, I want to see you.

LARRY

That's preposterous. People are too busy for such nonsense. Men are out working and women don't have time with all the cleaning, laundry and shopping they have to do. Why in the world would anyone even want such a contraption?

HAROLD

Why...I'll tell you why...BECAUSE THAT'S PROGRESS!

(He points his finger in the air dramatically.)

(LARRY shakes his head and EXITS. HAROLD sits down and mimes talking on the

telephone. ENTER: DARRELL, he excitedly approaches HAROLD.)

DARRELL

(He points at LARRY'S "telephone" and announces.)
Hang up that outdated ear tether...I've got great news!
It's 1973, I'm Dr. Martin Cooper, and I've just invented
the cellphone.

HAROLD

(He finishes his "conversation" before turning to DARRELL.)
Yes dear, yes dear...I'll remember...milk and eggs...no I
won't forget again...I love you too, goodbye.

(He hangs up his "phone" and gives a quizzical look.)
What's a cellphone?

DARRELL

What's a cellphone? I'll tell you what it is, it's the
future...

(He waves a hand in a big arch in front of him.)
Forget about being chained to an immobile landline.

(He points accusingly at DARRELL'S "telephone".)
Soon you'll be able to have your phone with you wherever
you go...

(He mimes marching in place while talking on the phone.)
...walking down the street...

(He mimes eating while talking on the phone.)
...eating at your favorite restaurant...

(He mimes driving while talking on the phone.)
...or driving your car...

*(DARRELL and HAROLD turn to the audience and
shake their heads while waving disapproving
fingers at them.)*

*SFX: old fashioned telephone ring. HAROLD
answers the "phone".)*

HAROLD

Hello...yes dear. Of course I'll stop by the
cleaners...right after the Post Office and the grocery
store...I love you too.

(He hangs up and turns to glare at DARRELL.)
I can't get anything done as it is! Why in the world
would I want to spend any more time talking on the phone?

DARRELL

Why...I'll tell you why...BECAUSE THAT'S PROGRESS!
(He points his finger in the air dramatically.)

(HAROLD shakes his head and EXITS. DARRELL sits down begins miming merrily talking on the phone while driving down the road. ENTER: MISTY, who excitedly approaches DARRELL.)

MISTY

Stop flapping your word trap...I've got great news! It's 1992, I'm Matti Makkonen, and even though you can't get me to admit it, I've just invented text messaging!

DARRELL

(He closes his "cellphone" and pulls his "car" over.)
What's text messaging?

MISTY

What's text messaging? I'll tell you what it is, it's the future...

(She waves a hand in a big arch in front of her.)
Forget all about the spoken word, real-time conversations, and focusing your undivided attention on the person who's talking to you.

(She brings her hands up to mime texting as she talks.)
Need to send that special someone an important message...just fire off a quick BTW PUM&EOYWH ILY

DARRELL

BTW XYZ what?!

MISTY

(She rolls her eyes, then slowly states the full message.)
By-the-way, pick-up-milk-and-eggs-on-your-way-home, I-love-you.

DARRELL

You want me type out a bunch of unintelligible gibberish instead of using real words? Why would I do that, even the telegraph was easier to understand?

MISTY

Why...I'll tell you why...

(She starts to point her finger up in the air, then drops her arm back down and gives the audience a puzzled look.)
...BTP?...because that's progress???

(SETTING: MS. CHADWICK'S Classroom. A few STUDENTS are at their desks. ALEX is at his desk with his nose buried in his book. SAM is standing by his desk looking frazzled. ENTER: PENELOPE, who excitedly hurries up to join SAM.)

PENELOPE

Hi there!

(She pauses and studies SAM for a moment.)

You don't so look good, are you alright?

SAM

Yeah, sure, I'm just a little worn out...

(He turns and deadpans to the audience.)

...it feels like we just went through the last week and a half in about eight minutes.

PENELOPE

(She frowns, then looks at the audience, shaking her head.)
It has been a bit of a blur...

(She's suddenly excited.)

...but it's finally here...*it's test day!*

(ENTER: WALTER and HAROLD, they arrive just as PENELOPE is shouting.)

WALTER

What's all the hoopla about?

SAM

Believe it or not, Penelope here's overjoyed that we get to take a history test today.

WALTER

Dude, you might as well get used to it, that's just who she is.

SAM

I guess you're right. But it's just so sad. There must be something we can be do about it...medication, or maybe a good therapist.

WALTER

That might be worth a try.

PENELOPE

I'm right here you know. And this *is* exciting. After all the hard work we've done. We finally get to see the fruit of our labors!

WALTER

Maybe medication *and* a therapist.

SAM

Yeah!

(PENELOPE'S mouth drops open in disbelief. SAM and WALTER break into big smiles.)

WALTER

(He steps to PENELOPE'S side and gives her a hug.)
Settle down, little sister, we're just having a bit of fun with you. We're just as excited as you are.
(He points to the classroom door.)
But maybe not as much as them...

(ENTER: LARRY, DARRELL and NORMAN. They are fully decked out as the Fife and Drum Corps from the American Revolutionary War painting "The Spirit of '76". LARRY has the fife, while DARRELL and NORMAN have drums. They start playing Yankee Doodle Dandy as they enter. They march up to PENELOPE and company. NOTE: LARRY will walk with a limp as if one of his legs has a splint on the knee.)

LARRY

(He stops playing as they reach the GROUP and barks.)
Detail, Halt!

(THE GEEKS stumble to a halt while trying to look serious and dignified.)

PENELOPE

Wow, that's quite an entrance, guys.

LARRY

(He brings his hand up in a salute to PENELOPE and states.)
Easy Company, reporting for duty, ma'am.

PENELOPE

Okay. Well then...ah, get right to it, I guess...

LARRY

(Still holding his salute, he answers crisply.)

Yes, ma'am.

(He stands statue still for a few moments then rolls his eyes toward his saluting hand and gives a couple of head nudges to give PENELOPE a clue.)

PENELOPE

Oh, okay.

(She makes an awkward attempt at a salute.)

LARRY

Thank you, ma'am.

(He rips his salute down and Barks at DARRELL and NORMAN.)
Battle stations men!

(The GEEKS march off to their seats.

ENTER: RITA and MISTY, wearing their cheerleader uniforms, complete with pompoms. They move quickly over to PENELOPE.

ENTER: VINNIE, a few steps behind the GIRLS, he pauses just inside the door to watch.)

PENELOPE

(She looks at RITA and MISTY with confusion.)

Did I miss something, are we having practice today?

RITA

Nooo, Misty and I put together a little routine to get Alex psyched up for the big test.

PENELOPE

Really? Okay, let's see it.

(ALEX looks up from his book. RITA and MISTY take their stances and start doing a cheer, complete with typical cheerleading moves).

RITA AND MISTY

Say, hey
You've got a big test today
And you'll be his-tory without a passing grade

We all know you've studied real hard
Just to get this far
But if you don't get an A, Alex
Then you're not gonna play, Alex
Then your grades will get sacked
And we'll have to get another quarterback

RITA

(She puts a hand on her hip and points her finger at ALEX.)
Those who fail to study history are doomed to repeat it...

RITA AND MISTY

(They shout in unison.)

...IN SUMMER SCHOOL!

*(RITA and MISTY finish the cheer, jumping
and pompom shaking while EVERYONE but ALEX
laughs and cheers them on.)*

ALEX

Really, Rita? Are you trying to psych me up...or out?

RITA

Just remember what FDR said, Alex, "There's nothing to
fear, but fear itself.

*(RITA doesn't wait for a response. She and
MISTY take their seats.)*

ALEX

(He's suddenly panicked.)

FDR said what?!

(He looks at SAM with wide eyes.)

We didn't study anything about that!

SAM

Nooo...but Ms. Chadwick covered it when she taught us about
his inaugural speech.

ALEX

Inauga what? How many other things am I supposed to know that we didn't study?!

(SFX: Bell rings. EVERYONE starts to get settled in and ready for class. VINNIE, who has been watching ALEX, gets a smirk on his face and walks up to him.)

VINNIE

Dude, you didn't know FDR said that...really? I have to tell you...if I was you, I'd be fearing a big old fat "F".
(He struts away toward his desk.)

PENELOPE

(She steps in front of VINNIE to stop him.)
Vinnie, I hope you do well on the test. I'll be praying for you.

VINNIE

Keep that to yourself, God girl. The Jet doesn't need any help from you, your little band of bozos or your make-believe God.

(VINNIE stalks off to his desk and will try to position himself to cheat off of LARRY, but LARRY will notice and block him. VINNIE will give a "so what" shrug and settle in.)

PENELOPE

(She suddenly looks horrified.)

Oh my!

SAM

What's wrong?

PENELOPE

We forgot to pray!!!

(ENTER: MS. CHADWICK, in her usual flurry. She flies to the front of the classroom.)

MS. CHADWICK

Good morning, everyone.

(The STUDENTS return her greeting with mixed enthusiasm as they settle in.)

MS. CHADWICK

Alright, you all know what where here for...so clear off your desks and let's get started.

(She starts handing out tests, face down, on each desk.)

PENELOPE

(She's anguished, waves her hand frantically.)

Ms. Chadwick! I'm sorry to interrupt, but it's important!

MS. CHADWICK

(Stops and turns to look at PENELOPE.)

Yes, Penelope, what is it?

PENELOPE

Our study group always starts with prayer, but in all the excitement this morning, we forgot. Could we please say a quick prayer before we begin?

MS. CHADWICK

(She looks conflicted, sighs.)

I'm sorry, I wish I could, but the school doesn't allow it. They're afraid someone might be offended.

VINNIE

(He interjects loudly.)

I'd be offended!

WALTER

This is America! I say we vote on it...

(He rushes on before anyone can object.)

...all in favor?

(He raises his own hand and looks around expectantly.)

(PENELOPE, SAM, ALEX, HAROLD, RITA, MISTY and the GEEKS all quickly and enthusiastically raise their hands.)

WALTER

Any opposed?

(No other STUDENTS beside VINNIE react.)

VINNIE

(Throws both hands in the air and waves them frantically.)
Opposed, opposed, opposed!!!

WALTER

Looks like the ayes have it, Ms. C.

MS. CHADWICK

Unfortunately Walter, your votes don't count as much as the Supreme Court's...and they say we can't have prayer during class.

LARRY

That's not right! What happened to freedom of religion?

MS. CHADWICK

Please sit down, Larry. This is not the time to debate this. We have an important test to take, remember?

ALEX

(He's visibly upset as he silently holds up his hand.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She reluctantly calls on Alex.)

Yes Alex? Please make it quick, we do need to get started.

ALEX

Ms. C, I don't really care what some old men in black robes said, I need all the help I can get right now.

MS. CHADWICK

I'm sorry, Alex, I really wish I could...

SAM

(He calmly interjects.)

Ms. Chadwick, what about if we all just took a few moments to sit here quietly at our desks? That way we can all get refocused and ready to take the test, *whichever* way each of us decides we should.

MS. CHADWICK

(She considers for a moment then gives a little smile.)
I think that would be a fine idea, Sam. It never hurts to refocus.

(She addresses the class.)

Alright everyone; you can quietly prepare yourselves for the next minute or two while I finish handing out the tests.

(SAM looks meaningfully at PENELOPE and gives her a nod. PENELOPE bows her head and begins to pray silently. The STUDY GROUP bows their heads with her. MS. CHADWICK finishes handing out the tests and returns to the front of the classroom. PENELOPE finishes and looks up and the STUDY GROUP follows suit. ALEX is much more relaxed.)

WALTER

(Enthusiastically.)

Amen!

MS. CHADWICK

(She gives WALTER a stern look.)

WALTER

Did I say that out loud?

(He holds a conciliatory hand up to the other students.)
Sorry about that everyone, it just slipped out...

(He looks at VINNIE.)

...I hope I didn't offend anyone.

MS. CHADWICK

(She's holding back a smile.)

I think that'll do, Walter.

(She addresses the class.)

You all know the rules; you have forty minutes to complete the test. The test itself is comprised of twenty-five multiple choice questions with a short essay at the end. Make sure you mark your answers clearly and, as always, spelling and penmanship do count.

(She looks around the room then at her watch.)

Alright then, good luck and...begin.

(The STUDENTS get busy. The STUDY GROUP, including ALEX, all look confident. VINNIE doesn't and tries to look at LARRY'S paper

again, which LARRY blocks. Desperate, VINNIE decides to copy off of the KID beside him who has been making confused faces as he makes obvious guesses.)

ALEX

(He throws his arms in the air and shouts triumphantly.)
Yes...there *is* nothing to fear but fear itself!

MS. CHADWICK

Alex, test taking is supposed to be a silent activity.

ALEX

Sorry about that. I was just a little caught up in the moment.

(He determinedly goes back to working.)

*(SETTING: MS. CHADWICK'S Classroom.
Only ALEX is still working while the STUDY GROUP
watches him anxiously. PENELOPE begins to pray
silently.)*

MS. CHADWICK

(She looks at her watch and calls out.)
Time's up. Alex, please bring your paper up to me.

*(ALEX makes a final, punctuating mark on his
paper and looks up with a satisfied smile.
He notices the STUDY GROUP'S worried faces
and looks puzzled.)*

ALEX

Are you guys alright?

*(PENELOPE and the OTHERS give disbelieving
looks. ALEX shrugs, takes his paper to MS.
CHADWICK, and stands there expectantly.)*

MS. CHADWICK

Is there something I can help you with, Alex?

ALEX

I'm just waiting to find out what my grade is.

MS. CHADWICK

(She gives a disbelieving laugh.)
I'm sorry, but I'm afraid you'll have to wait. I'll grade them over the weekend and hand them back to you on Monday.

ALEX

(He looks like someone just punched him in the gut.)
Monday! I can't wait until Monday! I'll have a nervous breakdown.

PENELOPE

(She gets her determined look and throws up her hand.)
Ms. Chadwick.

MS. CHADWICK

Yes, Penelope?

PENELOPE

I know how hard you work and how you already go above and beyond to be a great teacher...

MS. CHADWICK

(Smiling, She cuts PENELOPE off.)

Alright, Penelope, now that we've established how wonderful I am...*what do you want?*

PENELOPE

Well, since you are so incredibly dedicated I know you'll probably work through lunch anyway...

(She takes a breath and gushes.)

...could you just this once grade our tests today?

(She really speeds up.)

We've all worked so hard...I mean, really, really, really hard, and...

(She points to ALEX.)

...if we have to wait until Monday, Alex may end up in therapy.

MS. CHADWICK

(She's laughing.)

Alright, I'll do it. I must say, I've never seen anyone this excited about a test before.

(The STUDY GROUP gives a collective cheer. ALEX becomes solemn, looks up with closed eyes, silently mouths, "Thank You".

(SFX: bell rings.

Several of the STUDENTS begin to gather their things to depart.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She speaks loudly over the din of activity.)

Anyone who wants to can stay around until I'm finished grading your papers. For the rest of you, have a good weekend and I'll see you Monday.

(The STUDY GROUP and VINNIE stay in their seats. EXIT: EVERYONE ELSE. MS. CHADWICK starts grading papers.)

*(SETTING: MS. CHADWICK'S Classroom.
EVERYONE is still at their desks; the GEEKS are playing Row Sham Bow, HAROLD is snoozing, VINNIE looks bored, WALTER is sitting calmly, SAM is reading, PENELOPE is praying, and ALEX looks like he's sitting on a bed of nails.)*

MS. CHADWICK

(She finishes grading the last test and stands up.)
Alright everyone, I'm finally finished, thank you all for your patience.

(MS. CHADWICK will hand out the papers from the top to bottom of the stack, so she will have to move around the room a bit.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She walks to LARRY and hands him his test.)
You did your usual good work, Larry.

LARRY

(He looks the test over and off-handedly announces.)
I got an A.

(The STUDY GROUP gives him a cheer.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She steps to DARRELL and hands him his test.)
Very well done too, Darrell.

DARRELL

(He looks embarrassed, holds up his paper.)
I, g-got an A minus!

(The STUDY GROUP gives another cheer.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She moves to NORMAN, hands him his test.)
You as well, Norman.

NORMAN

(Looks down at his paper and gives a happy nod.)

DARRELL

(He leans over and looks at NORMAN'S paper.)
He got a B plus!

(More Cheers.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She moves to WALTER, hands him his test.)
A noticeable improvement, Walter. In the future I'll expect more of this, and a little less clowning around.

WALTER

(He puts a hand over his heart in feigned offense.)
Ms. C, you know I *always* give you everything I've got.
(He looks at his grade and gets a huge smile, then looks over at VINNIE and does his best VINNIE impersonation while pointing at his own chest and loudly announcing.)
The Walter...got an A!!!

(There are laughs and cheers while VINNIE turns away in disgust.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She moves to HAROLD and hands him his test.)
You did your usual excellent job, Harold.

HAROLD

(He nonchalantly takes the test, and humbly says.)
A minus.

(More cheers, WALTER give him a high five.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She moves to RITA, hands out her test.)
This is your best effort of the year, Rita, I'm proud of you.

RITA

(She looks at the paper, stands up and makes a "C" followed by a "+" with her arms, and happily declares.)
C plus!

(There are claps, laughs and cheers.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She turns to MISTY and hands her test to her.)
This also is quite a bit better than you've done to this point, Misty. Good job and keep it up.

MISTY

(She takes the paper and excitedly shows it off.)
I got a B!

(She gets lots of cheers, even from VINNIE.)

MS. CHADWICK

(Moves to SAM and hands him his test.)
Excellent job for you too, Sam.

SAM

(He looks at paper and quietly informs everyone.)
I got an A.

WALTER

(He does a good natured imitation of SAM.)
I got an A.

(There are laughs and cheers.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She steps to PENELOPE and pauses.)
I'm only able to grade you on the test itself, PENELOPE. If
I could have given you *all* the credit you deserve, you'd
have the highest grade in the class.
(She hands PENELOPE her test.)

PENELOPE

(She's apprehensive, then smiles and holds it up with joy.)
I got a B plus!

*(The STUDY GROUP shows how happy and excited
they are for her, yelling, high fiving and
congratulating her.)*

MS. CHADWICK

(She walks over to VINNIE, looks somber as she speaks.)
You did pass Vinnie...
(She hands him his test.)
...but I'm sorry to say it's far from your best effort.

VINNIE

(He looks shocked as he sees his grade.)
I got a D? *The Jet* got a D?
(He sits there dazed, shaking his head.)

(The other students are silent and look troubled after hearing VINNIE'S score, especially PENELOPE.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She walks over to ALEX, and pauses.)

(PENELOPE and the OTHERS all lean forward in their seats expectantly while ALEX looks terrified.)

MS. CHADWICK

(She hands ALEX his test.)

Alex, your essay on President Lincoln is the best I've ever seen. Congratulations...you just passed World History.

ALEX

(He stares at the paper with a shocked expression for a moment then shows it to EVERYONE in dismay.)
I got an A plus.

(The classroom explodes into pandemonium. The STUDY GROUP leaps to their feet and swarm ALEX in jubilation. There will be lots of laughing, hugging, congratulation and other general celebration for a few minutes. During which, MS. CHADWICK will make her way back to her desk. NORMAN will end up positioned at the edge of the crowd with his back to VINNIE, stationed between VINNIE and MS. CHADWICK'S desk. VINNIE will look as shocked as ALEX when he first hears ALEX'S grade, then he will become angrier and angrier.)

VINNIE

(He's been muttering to himself, now starts to get loud.)
No way is this happening! Uh uh...the Jet isn't gonna stand for this.

(He leaps to his feet and storms toward MS. CHADWICK.)
Ms. C, we need to talk!

(SFX: SM begins just before VINNIE reaches NORMAN. VINNIE will draw back his arms intending to shove NORMAN viciously out of the way but NORMAN will "sense" him and make a very precise and fluid side step that

leaves VINNIE stumbling past, pawing helplessly at the empty air. NORMAN will do a back step, which smoothly positions him behind VINNIE, and allows him to bring his leg up to give VINNIE a solid push on his backside. NORMAN will finish his kick by ending up perfectly balanced with one leg still high in the air. VINNIE will launch forward out of control. End SM. VINNIE finally loses all his balance and ends up falling to the floor to rollover and stare in shock and disbelief back at NORMAN.)

NORMAN

(With precision, drops into a Karate "ready" stance. He then speaks out with a loud and confident voice.)
Back off, Dude!

(EVERYONE looks at NORMAN in complete amazement. VINNIE finally breaks the spell by climbing to his feet and turning to MS. CHADWICK.)

VINNIE

Did you see that!?

MS. CHADWICK

(She's as surprised as anyone.)
Actually, I did. I saw the whole thing.

VINNIE

And...?!

MS. CHADWICK

(She considers for a moment, then shrugs.)
And if I were you, I'd back off...Dude.
(She becomes serious.)
Vinnie, I don't think Coach Jackson would be happy if you got suspended for trying to push around another student.

(VINNIE'S mouth drops open in shock, then he jumps up and runs out. EXIT: VINNIE.
The STUDY GROUP just keeps looking at NORMAN in stunned silence.)

WALTER

(He breaks the silence.)

Wow! That's all I've got to say about that...WOW!

LARRY

(He does an uncoordinated imitation of NORMAN'S stance.)
I'm telling you, you don't mess with the Normanator!

*(EVERYONE laughs and starts fussing over
NORMAN.)*

MS. CHADWICK

(She laughs along with the others, then interjects.)
Alright, I think we've had enough excitement for one
morning.

(She checks her watch.)

And, there's still time to eat if we hurry.

(EXIT: MS. CHADWICK; she disappears in a whirlwind.)

ALEX

You know what...I'm starved.

(He puts his hands on LARRY'S and HAROLD'S shoulders.)
C'mon everyone, I'm buying.

*(General nods and comments of agreement.
EVERYONE except SAM and PENELOPE moves
toward the door.)*

NORMAN

Hey Alex, since our lunches are all paid for in advance;
how are you going to buy them.

ALEX

It's the thought that counts, right?

WALTER

Alex, my man, you just got an A plus on a history test.
I'd say all *your* thoughts have been used up for a long time
to come.

*(There's laughter from EVERYONE including
ALEX. EXIT: EVERYONE but SAM and PENELOPE,
who are hanging back, talking as they slowly
gather their things to walk out too.)*

PENELOPE

Sam, thank you so much. You said you'd always be there for me and you really were.

SAM

Sure thing, no big deal.

PENELOPE

But it is a big deal, I know what I pain I was at times...
(She notices SAM looking a little impatient and hurries.)
...anyway, I just think you were wonderful and I'm sure your dad would be very proud of you.

SAM

(He goes from impatient to smiling.)
You're welcome. And believe it or not, I even had fun.
But...

(He switches to his normal, cavalier self.)
...let's hold off on all the mushy stuff for now...
(He goes back to gathering his things.)
...we've got the rest of our lives for that.

PENELOPE

(She looks hurt for a moment, then a little irritated.)
I'm sorry, I was just trying to be nice...
(She stops and reflects for a moment.)
...what do you mean, "the rest of our lives for that?"

SAM

(He sighs, looks and sounds resigned.)
Yeah, well, I just don't see any way around it. I figure that by the start of school next year we'll be...you know...
(He holds up his hands to make "quotation marks".)
...a couple...then comes dating, and all that junk. Before you know it, boom, High School will be over and we'll either head off to some seminary together or...*knowing you*...

(He shakes his head.)
...we might just get married and dash straight off to some dark and desolate corner of the world to start saving souls and having a bunch of "ah" kids.
(He finishes putting stuff in his pack and turns to leave.)

PENELOPE

(Open mouthed in shock, she finally finds her voice.)
Really...all that...just like that?!

SAM

(Big sigh.)

I'm afraid it's inevitable.

PENELOPE

Well gee, you don't have to sound so excited about it...

(She slaps SAM'S shoulder.)

...and what would be so terrible about being married to me anyway? *Not*, mind you, that I'm saying *I* would want to be married to *you* either!

SAM

(He reacts when PENELOPE slaps him.)

Hey, what happened to "violence never solved anything"? And I don't really want to get into any of this right now anyway. I just want to think about doing something fun.

(He starts walking again, leaving PENELOPE behind.)

PENELOPE

Sure...fine! Go right ahead...just drop something like *marriage* and *kids* on me and then walk away...

(She shakes her head and hurried to catch SAM.)

...and what in the world is an "ah" kid anyway?

SAM

(He sounds resigned again.)

You know...Isai-ah, Rebek-ah, Zachari-ah, Jeremi-ah. Didn't you hear me...we're supposed to be talking about something light and fun...like football.

PENELOPE

Football?! You hate football!

SAM

Noooo...I love football...I love to *play* football.

PENELOPE

I don't believe this...we're getting married, *and* I have to watch you get pulverized by some brute of a lineman?

SAM

Hey, watch the name calling! And the complaining...I'm doing this just as much for you! You're the one who's going to insist we find a way to *reach out* to Vinnie, aren't you?

*(PENELOPE and SAM should now be at the door.
The rest of their dialogue will take place
off stage.)*

PENELOPE

What are you talking about...I haven't said *anything* about Vinnie...

(Pause.)

...still, he's so lost, we can't just stand by and do nothing!

SAM

You're-not-listeningggg...

PENELOPE

(She asks after a short pause.)

So just how many of these "ah" kids are we talking about anyway?

SAM

F-o-o-t-b-a-l-l!

(SETTING: Center Stage under the Spotlight. PENELOPE stands facing the audience with head down. Just at the edge of the spotlight, standing in a horseshoe formation, is the REST OF THE CAST.)

PENELOPE

(She sighs deeply, claps her hands and prays.)
Lord, I'm overwhelmed by all that You've done here.

(She pauses to reflect.)
I can't believe that it was really only a few weeks ago when I asked You, "Now what, God?"

(pause.)
Lord, help me to never doubt You again. Help me to follow You with all of my heart, with all of my soul, and with all of my strength.

(She pauses and raises her arms up high in praise.)
Oh, dear God, please help me...please help all of us...to never again hold back asking, "now what?" Instead let us march forward with confidence...serving wherever You send us, letting our light shine in the darkness while living our lives to the fullest...all to Your glory, Lord...glory to God on the highest!

(pause.)
Oh, Lord...I just can't wait...*WHAT'S NEXT?!*

WALTER

(He's still at the edge of the spotlight, he calls out with reverence and resolution.)
And all God's people said...

EVERYONE (CAST, CREW, AND HOPEFULLY THE AUDIENCE)
(They shout!)
AMEN!