

NOW YOU SEE ME

One-Act Play

by
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NOW YOU SEE ME

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(The present day. Nowhere particular in America. set on an empty stage. Enter the actor playing FIRST SCHOOL OFFICIAL, not in character, who should assume the traditional curtain-raiser speech position.)

ACTOR: Welcome to the Choate Rosemary Hall Summer Arts Conservatory presentation of *Now You See Me* by Jonathan Dorf. At this time, please turn off all beepers and cellular phones, and please refrain from videotaping or taking flash photographs of the performance. In the event of a fire or an explosion, please exit the theater in an orderly fashion through the marked doors.

(As ACTOR exits, a TEENAGE GIRL in a spotlight pulls out a cellular phone and dials. A phone rings. FIRST SCHOOL OFFICIAL, age indeterminate, returns to the stage carrying a phone handset, though probably not the whole phone.)

FIRST OFFICIAL: Hello?

GIRL: I'm blowing up the school.

FIRST OFFICIAL: Please hold.

(Enter SECOND OFFICIAL, a principal-like persona, perhaps carrying the rest of the phone. FIRST OFFICIAL hands the phone handset to SECOND OFFICIAL.)

GIRL: I'm blowing up the school.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Why?

GIRL: Someone looked at me funny.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Funny ha-ha?

GIRL: Funny weird.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Googly eyes weird?

GIRL: What are googly eyes?

SECOND OFFICIAL: I'm not sure. Maybe something like this. *(makes googly eyes)*

GIRL: We're on the phone.

SECOND OFFICIAL: You kind of bulge one eye - hang on. *(to the rest of the office)* Can anybody make googly eyes?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Isn't it sort of - *(makes a version of googly eyes)*

SECOND OFFICIAL: I thought that was bug eyes.

FIRST OFFICIAL: No. That's googly. Bug is like this. *(makes a version of bug eyes)*

SECOND OFFICIAL: Are you positive?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Not a hundred-ten percent.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Can we get a number and call you back?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Maybe search the Internet or form a committee.

GIRL: I want to blow up the school and everybody in it!

SECOND OFFICIAL: Are you a girl?

GIRL: What do you think?

SECOND OFFICIAL: I think you are, but you could be disguising your voice.

FIRST OFFICIAL: It's a girl? *(SECOND OFFICIAL nods.)* Girls don't blow up schools.

SECOND OFFICIAL: I know. *(to GIRL)* This is a highly inappropriate conversation. Girls don't blow up schools.

FIRST OFFICIAL: Not in this neighborhood.

GIRL: Fine.

(BOY enters. GIRL gives him the cell phone and HE takes her place. GIRL exits. Pause while the FIRST and SECOND OFFICIALS scrutinize BOY intensely.)

SECOND OFFICIAL: No. I don't see it.

FIRST OFFICIAL: Hang on. *(to BOY)* Look mean.

BOY: What?

FIRST OFFICIAL: Look mean. *(brief pause)* Go ahead. *(BOY tries to look mean.)* Try maybe closing your mouth all the way. *(BOY does so.)* No. You're right.

SECOND OFFICIAL: It's not there.

BOY: What's not there?

SECOND OFFICIAL: The look.

FIRST OFFICIAL: Maybe it's the clothes.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Yes!

BOY: What's wrong with my clothes?

SECOND OFFICIAL: I'm thinking more black, or something baggy. Or with a slogan.

FIRST OFFICIAL: Do you buy them, or do your parents buy them?

SECOND OFFICIAL: That's a good question. Mom! Dad!

(Enter MOM and DAD carrying a bag, which they hand to FIRST OFFICIAL. FIRST OFFICIAL pulls a black T-shirt out of the bag and shoves it on BOY's head. It's okay if the shirt covers his face, forcing him to struggle to see.)

FIRST OFFICIAL: Try this.

SECOND OFFICIAL: Are you aware of how your son dresses?

DAD: Honey, we have a son?

MOM: That's why I didn't recognize this laundry. **(dumps the contents of the bag, black and other subversive-looking T-shirts, onto the ground)**

SECOND OFFICIAL: He threatened to blow up the school.

MOM: In that outfit?

DAD: I have a son?

BOY: There's nothin' wrong with my clothes.

DAD: **(to BOY)** Is this your laundry?

MOM: You look like everyone else. **(MOM, soon joined by DAD, piles the T-shirts on BOY)** You should be special.

SECOND OFFICIAL: **(helping with the T-shirts)** Maybe a badge.

MOM: What would people say about us? **(completes the BOY's outfit with a pair of sunglasses)** How is anybody going to know about your problem?

BOY: I don't wanna wear -

SECOND OFFICIAL: How are we going to tell you apart -

BOY: Leave me alone!

FIRST OFFICIAL: If you're just -

BOY: Leave me -

MOM and OFFICIALS: Average?

BOY: Now you see me, **(becomes, in his mind, invisible)** now you don't! **(puts the sunglasses on DAD's face, then steps out of the scene)**

MOM: Honey, you know I hate it when you wear sunglasses.

DAD: They're not my sunglasses.

SECOND OFFICIAL: We're not needed here.

FIRST OFFICIAL: Right. Family problem. **(FIRST and SECOND OFFICIAL exit.)**

MOM: I like to see your eyes. So I can tell if you're lying.

DAD: These aren't my sunglasses.

(MOM and DAD exit. The setting becomes a classroom with three seats. Enter two girls, JANE and JOANNE, and a boy, JOHN. JANE and JOANNE sit, leaving the seat between them free. JOHN is about to join them. BOY watches them, but they don't acknowledge his existence.)

JANE: That seat's taken.

JOHN: By who?

JANE: I forget his name. But I know somebody sits here. He smiles at me sometimes.

BOY: **(sits between JANE and JOANNE)** Now you see me.

JOHN: When's he gonna show up?

JANE: He sat here all year.

(A bell rings.)

JOHN: He's late.

JOANNE: I thought a girl sat here.

JANE: No. It's a guy. With the... **(can't think of the color)** hair.

JOANNE: Oh yeah. **(beat; SHE has a realization)** No. You're thinking of that other guy.

JOHN: Can I sit down before the teacher gets here?

JANE and JOANNE: Somebody's sitting here!

TEACHER: **(female; enters carrying a stack of papers)** John, why aren't you in a seat?

JOHN: I thought we weren't supposed to sit until you got here.

TEACHER: John.

JOHN: I wanted to sit there - **(points at the space occupied by BOY, but not at BOY)**

TEACHER: How can you sit where somebody's already sitting?

JANE: **(to JOHN so TEACHER doesn't hear)** Duh!

JOHN: Who?

TEACHER: Don't talk back.

JOHN: I'm just askin'.

BOY: It's my seat.

TEACHER: It's an assigned seat.

BOY: To me.

JOHN: To who?

TEACHER: Detention!

JOANNE: I'm positive it's a girl.

JANE: I'm totally positive it's a boy.

JOHN: There's nobody there.

TEACHER: **(to JOHN)** Principal! Now! **(Exit JOHN.)** Someone didn't put his or her name on his or her paper. It was an "A" paper. **(JANE and JOANNE's hands shoot up.)** If it had had a name on it. Jane and Joanne, I have *your* papers. **(JANE and JOANNE put their hands down. TEACHER returns the papers. BOY's hand goes up.)**

BOY: I didn't put my name on my paper.

JANE: Told you it was a boy.

(Enter GIRL, who stands behind BOY.)

TEACHER: **(looks at paper)** What's your name?

BOY: I said I didn't put it on.

TEACHER: But what is it?

BOY: Guess.

TEACHER: I have no idea. You could be anybody. How do you expect me to know something like that? I'm just a teacher. If I were President of the United States, would you expect me to forecast the weather?

JANE: You're the guy who smiles at me.

GIRL: **(switches places with BOY)** No, I'm not.

JOANNE: Told you it was a girl.

JANE: Why are we saving a seat for a girl?

(JOHN re-enters.)

JOANNE: **(to GIRL)** Look - Elvis!

(GIRL gets up and wanders a few steps in the direction JOANNE indicates.)

JOHN: He wasn't there. You want me to go back and wait? **(JANE and JOANNE grab JOHN and sit him down between them.)**

TEACHER: You might as well stay for now.

BOY: What about me?

GIRL: There's no Elvis.

JANE: Is too. I swear to God.

(JANE gestures for GIRL to look again. GIRL does so.)

BOY: That was my seat.

JOHN: You moved.

BOY: What's your problem?

JOHN: There was nobody sitting there.

BOY: I was sitting there.

JOHN: What you gonna do about it?

(Beat. Exit BOY. GIRL returns.)

GIRL: Elvis is dead.

JANE: He just left the building.

JOANNE: We saw him go.

JOHN: Yeah. Blue suede shoes.

(A bell rings. TEACHER freezes. Exit JANE, JOHN and JOANNE. GIRL sits in one of the now vacant seats. Enter JENN and JENN'S FRIEND, both students who sit next to GIRL, who hasn't moved. TEACHER may remain frozen or perhaps mime teaching.)

JENN: Hi. I'm Jenn. Move over a little?

GIRL: Sure. *(moves closer to the exit, probably by moving her chair)*

JENN'S FRIEND: Mind if I sit next to Jenn? I'm Jenn's friend. *(JENN'S FRIEND waits for GIRL to move. GIRL moves closer to the exit again, and JENN'S FRIEND sits between GIRL and JENN. Beat. JENN gets up.)*

JENN: *(to GIRL)* Could you move over a little more? Is that okay?

(GIRL moves over a little more so that JENN can sit between JENN'S FRIEND and GIRL. JENN'S FRIEND gets up almost immediately and indicates that SHE'd like GIRL to move over.)

JENN'S FRIEND: *(friendly)* Do you mind? *(GIRL walks away from them.)* What's up with *her*?

TEACHER: There's no problem, Jenn - is there?

JENN: No.

TEACHER: No problem.

(GIRL approaches TEACHER. Enter BOY, who observes from the edge of the stage. Long pause. GIRL clears her throat. Another long pause.)

GIRL: Excuse me. *(pause)* Mrs. Teacher?

TEACHER: What?

GIRL: Nothing.

TEACHER: Good. I'm glad we talked like this. *(GIRL nods.)* Come back any time. *(GIRL and BOY change places, with GIRL gradually fading into the background.)* You have to leave before you can come back. *(beat)* You may come back any time.

BOY: They took my seat.

TEACHER: Seat-stealing happens.

BOY: Twice.

TEACHER: You can't cling like a sock. *(beat)* If I wanted student cling, I'd still be a guidance counselor. *(beat)* Come back any time.

(Beat. TEACHER exits, as do JENN and JENN'S FRIEND. GUIDANCE SECRETARY enters and sets up a card table to use as a desk; on it are pamphlets. BOY approaches her.)

BOY: I wanna see my counselor.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: Who's your counselor?

BOY: I don't know.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: It's on your schedule.

BOY: I can't find my schedule.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: You were given one.

BOY: I can't find it.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: Find your schedule and come back.

(Enter a COLLEGE REPRESENTATIVE with a stack of brochures.)

BOY: Does it matter who I talk to?

COLLEGE REP: Of course it matters.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: You can only see yours.

COLLEGE REP: I'm here from the college of your choice. Your college choice matters.

BOY: I don't care about college.

COLLEGE REP: You should.

BOY: Can't you look it up?

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: The computer is down.

BOY: I only need a minute.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: Only your counselor knows you. *(Enter JUNE, a female student.)* June, go right in. Mrs. Guidance is waiting for you.

BOY: I was first.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: She has an appointment.

COLLEGE REP: You don't even need an appointment. It's an open information session.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: You need to make an appointment.

BOY: Can she see me later?

(Enter MRS. COUNSELOR talking to JESSIE, a female student.)

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: Much later.

BOY: **(to MRS. COUNSELOR)** Excuse me.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: So much later, it'll make your head spin.

BOY: Excuse me. I need some help.

MRS. COUNSELOR: I'm sorry. I'm counseling now.

COLLEGE REP: We have a great advising system at the college of your choice.

BOY: When can I talk to you?

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: You won't even remember you made an appointment.

MRS. COUNSELOR: Are you on my list?

JESSIE: This is *my* appointment.

BOY: I don't know.

COLLEGE REP: I have some literature.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: An appointment at the end of the world!

(COLLEGE REP starts putting pamphlets into BOY's hands.)

MRS. COUNSELOR: Maybe you're on Mrs. Guidance's list.

JESSIE: Mrs. Counselor!

MRS. COUNSELOR: Can't talk. Sorry.

JESSIE: Focus!

(MRS. COUNSELOR and JESSIE exit.)

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: At the end of time itself!

BOY: How long do you think that'll be?

(JUNE enters. SHE has obviously just exited MRS. GUIDANCE's office.)

COLLEGE REP: Take more literature.

BOY: She's free.

COLLEGE REP: Of course it's free.

BOY: Can I go in?

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: She's not your counselor. Fill out your forms, June.

(JUNE fills out a form at the GUIDANCE SECRETARY's desk.)

COLLEGE REP: The literature's always free.

BOY: Mrs. Guidance!

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: You can't go in there.

COLLEGE REP: We do charge for the college, and you need to apply first.

JUNE: **(reaching for a college brochure)** Can I have one?

(Enter MRS. GUIDANCE, another female guidance counselor, indistinguishable from the first one.)

MRS. GUIDANCE: June, we're not finished yet.

JUNE: I thought we were.

MRS. GUIDANCE: No.

JUNE: Oh. Can I bring the college brochures in?

MRS. GUIDANCE: **(using JUNE as a shield against BOY)** Absolutely. Can you get more?

BOY: It'll only take a minute.

MRS. GUIDANCE: I want to go over all of them, line by line.

BOY: Can we at least -

MRS. GUIDANCE: June, one college isn't enough.

COLLEGE REP: Sign up here. **(shoves a pen into the BOY's hand)**

MRS. GUIDANCE: It isn't safe.

GUIDANCE SECRETARY: You're not on her list.

BOY: Mrs. Counselor said I was.
GUIDANCE SECRETARY: She said you weren't on *hers*.
JUNE: I'll get more brochures.
BOY: How do you know I'm not? You don't even know my name.
GUIDANCE SECRETARY: What's your name?
COLLEGE REP: Sign your name here.

(Enter a herd of literature-waving COLLEGE REPS of whatever gender is practical. GIRL takes the pen from BOY and approaches MRS. GUIDANCE.)

VARIOUS COLLEGE REPS: ***(these can continue as background in the rest of the scene)*** Learn about the right school! Get your info! Info here! Get it while it's hot! Fresh info!

(They sweep BOY offstage. JUNE grabs as much literature as SHE can carry.)

GIRL: My name's -
MRS. GUIDANCE: You're not on my list.
GIRL: But can't -
MRS. GUIDANCE: I'm busy with June. Through June. Find the right list.
GIRL: But -
MRS. GUIDANCE: Have a pamphlet. ***(MRS. GUIDANCE hands GIRL a pamphlet. JUNE staggers under the weight of the college brochures.)*** Every word is important, June.

(MRS. GUIDANCE exits with JUNE, picking up any brochures that JUNE drops. GUIDANCE SECRETARY holds up a sign in front of her face. It says "Gone for lunch. Back soon." SHE backs off the stage so that the sign is always visible. GIRL sits on the stage. A COLLEGE REP returns to throw a pillow at her. GIRL puts it under her head. Another COLLEGE REP throws a blanket over her. Both exit when their tasks are done. Beat. Enter MOM, who stares for a moment, then exits and returns pulling DAD behind her.)

MOM: Does she have school?
DAD: I thought I had a son. ***(Enter BOY, carrying a pair of dirty socks. HE pulls the covers and pillow away from GIRL. HE takes her place on the floor and drops the socks nearby. GIRL exits.)*** That's more like it. Is he sleeping?
MOM: He's watching TV.
DAD: Good. Only depressed people sleep all day.
MOM: Does he have school?
DAD: What day is today?
MOM: Wednesday.
DAD: I have to go to work.
MOM: What about my job?
DAD: I didn't know you got a job, honey. That's great. Call me.

(DAD exits. MOM nudges the BOY with her foot.)

MOM: Get up. ***(BOY turns over.)*** You can't watch TV all day. Not on a Wednesday. Not until after school.

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