

BETTER FOOTBALL THROUGH HIGH SCHOOL CHEMISTRY

By Murray Austin

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SYNOPSIS: Chicaloo Chicken cheerleaders (*The Fighting Chicks*) Laura, Hannah, and Cheryl have the dumbest boyfriends on campus. But when a quirky science experiment transforms these dim-witted football jocks into certified geniuses, the lowly Chickens become big-time winners, and the entire school quickly spirals out-of-control. Jordan J. Jawbreaker calls the hilarious play-by-play action for TFC (*That's "Tennessee Fried Chicken"*) Television, as coaches Murphy and Tanner seek to retain some sanity in what could be the Chicaloo Chickens' first ever football championship.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 MALES, 11 FEMALES, 1 EITHER, 1-20 EXTRAS;
DOUBLING POSSIBLE, GENDER FLEXIBLE)

CHICALOO CHICKEN PLAYERS

TOMMY DON WALLACE	Chicken	quarterback;	Laura's boyfriend
MOTOWN RIVERS	Chicken	running back;	Hannah's boyfriend
CHUCK PACE	Chicken	receiver;	Cheryl's boyfriend

CHEERLEADERS "THE FIGHTING CHICKS"

LAURA	Leader of the Chicks
HANNAH	Emotional; paranoid drama queen
CHERYL	Preppy

OTHER CHARACTERS

COACH MURPHY	Head coach
COACH TANNER	Assistant coach
JORDAN J JAWBREAKER	Quirky female sports announcer
MS. KASEY	Teacher
LOUIS	Science geek
GIRL 1	Commercial actor
BOY	Commercial actor
GIRL 2	Commercial actor

CRYSTAL	Chicaloo newspaper reporter
JANE	Chicaloo newspaper reporter
ASHLEY	Classroom gossip
MELANIE	Classroom gossip
DIRECTOR FOR COMMERCIAL	Another actor may double for this role

NON SPEAKING

HANNAH'S MOTHER	Adult wannabe cheerleader
ZOMBIES	1 – 20

***If desired, ASHLEY, MELANIE, and LOUIS may double as commercial actors, and practically anyone may double as DIRECTOR. Though football coaches are traditionally male, MURPHY and TANNER have been played successfully by females in several productions.**

***Any number of extras may be used for extra cheerleaders, zombies, students, and fans. Casts have ranged from 15 – 51.**

DURATION: 90 minutes

PRODUCTION NOTES

COSTUMES: When players enter during football games, they should be wearing identical jerseys, football tights, etc. It works best to completely leave out helmets, though they may simply be carried. Players should have a quick change of shirt and sweat pants for classroom scenes and the final athletic room scene. Football games may be played with a bench behind coaches, and set up with Gatorade bucket and cups.

Chicks should have identical skirts and tops, if not actual cheerleading uniforms. Pom-poms would be helpful, but aren't essential. They should also have a quick change for classroom scenes. Coaches should wear typical coaching attire, shorts, shirt, cap. For Act II, Scene 5, the final football scene, Coach Murphy should wear a black shirt and blue shorts, in order to match a line by Tommy Don. Jordan J Jawbreaker could dress elegantly, or even a bit bizarre. Sunglasses would be a nice touch.

SOUND EFFECTS

ACT 1, SCENE 4 - Bug formula explosion

ACT 1, SCENE 8 - Whistle sound

ACT 1, SCENE 10 - Sound effect of referee's gun

ACT 2, SCENE 2 - Rooster crowing

ACT 2, SCENE 2 - Four whistle sounds

ACT 2, SCENE 2 - referee's gun

ACT 2, SCENE 7 - Bug formula explosion

NOTES ON PERFORMANCE: This play is meant to move quickly. By using a spot and lighting different sides of the stage, one scene should flow into the next. An easier option is simply to light the entire Downstage area for the football scenes (a bench can be added for the locker room). A classroom set could be built Up Center, and, if desired, fan seating (with extras) could be Up Right. Jordan J. Jawbreaker can have a D.J. type set-up on one of the aprons, complete with desk, "Radio TFC sign, and flashing red light. Fight song music should be played for the transition of scenes. During games, the Coaches' dialogue as they watch should be fast paced, with appropriate pauses, as they watch the play develop. The coaches' body language, common eye focus and movement with both runs and passes will create a wonderful and a hilarious illusion of the game. Crowd sound effects are not really needed. If done well, the Coaches can make it much funnier on their own, and extra sound effects would be a distraction.

Hannah, the ultra-dramatic cheerleader, should refrain from simply yelling during her rants about her cheerleading mother. These should be spoken, with emotion, and should slowly build in intensity. But even at the height of emotion, avoid yelling. A controlled panic is more effective. Hannah should act out as much as possible, pantomiming the window, neighbors creeping around, etc.

At the final football game, the Chicks enter and perform several cheers. These final cheers may be done on stage or out in the audience. As they're literally cheering against their team, it would be fun if they harass the audience a bit as they exit each cheer (Example: "If you like Tommy Don, you're as mean as he is," "You Chickens ain't nothin'. You hear? Nothin'!").

PROPERTY LIST

ACT 1 - SCENE 1

Pen & mini-spiral (Crystal)
Pen & mini-spiral (Jane)
Pen and notepad (Cheryl)
A couple of tissues (Laura)

ACT 1 - SCENE 2

Test papers (Ms. Kasey)
Paper wad (Chuck)

ACT 1 - SCENE 3

Football (thrown from offstage)
Various equipment (Louis)

ACT 1 - SCENE 4

Canister (Louis)
Cup of water (Cheryl)

ACT 1 - SCENE 6

Test Papers

ACT 1 - SCENE 7

Director's clapper (Director)
Large handbag (Girl 2)
A TFC box (Girl 2)

ACT 1 - SCENE 8

Six yellow flags (from offstage)

ACT 1 - SCENE 9

Director's clapper (Director)
A large handbag (Girl 1)
A box of TFC (Girl 1)
Large TFC bucket (Girl 2)

ACT 1 - SCENE 11

Pen & mini-spiral (Crystal)
Pen & mini-spiral (Jane)

ACT 1 - SCENE 12

3 water bottles (Players)
Whistle sounds (from offstage)
Piece of paper (Mo)
Pencil, piece of paper (Chuck)
2 pieces of tape (Murphy)
Head Bandage (Tanner)

ACT II - SCENE 3

Pen & mini-spiral (Crystal)
Pen & mini-spiral (Jane)
Piece of paper (Ashley)
Small hat or beret (Tommy Don)
Piece of paper (Murphy)

ACT II - SCENE 5

Gatorade bucket (Players)
Water Bottle (Tommy Don)
Sunglasses (Mo & Chuck)

ACT II - SCENE 6

Director's clapper (Director)
Huge bucket of TFC (Girl 1)

ACT II - SCENE 7

Several large boxes
Canister (Louis)

Dedicated to Joe, Jane, Jennifer, and Paul

*REVISED ON 09-10-2013

ACT 1, SCENE 1

AT RISE: Chicaloo High School; Lights up on CRYSTAL and JANE, each carrying pen and mini-spiral. Scene is played in front of the curtain.

CRYSTAL: (*stares out, broadly gestures with hand*) I can see it... headlines swallowing the entire front page. "Chicaloo Football Team in Hunt for Championship." Maybe we could, like, double bold the headlines... so people will look.

JANE: Oh, they'll look. Then they'll double over laughing. Our team is *not* in some great quest for a championship. They're the worst team in the district... always have been.

CRYSTAL: So negative, girl. They've only lost one game all year.

JANE: (*sarcastically*) They play their second game Friday.

CRYSTAL: (*beat*) Oh.

JANE: Our school's whole tradition is built around bad football teams. All during the 60's and 70's, we weren't only winless... *and* scoreless... we never gained a single yard.

CRYSTAL: Ah, but during the 80's, we finally made a first down. (*dramatically, pointing like a referee would do*) First and ten!

JANE: (*beat*) Other team was offside.

CRYSTAL: (*deflated*) Still counts.

JANE: Barely.

CRYSTAL: We got better.

JANE: Oh sure. At one point in the 90's, we actually completed a forward pass.

CRYSTAL: (*dramatically again*) First and ten!

JANE: (*shakes head, rolls eyes*) Throughout decades of futility, we never once reached the other team's end zone.

CRYSTAL: Then in the new millennium, (*triumphantly*) we scored!

JANE: Who didn't? (*beat*) Many seasons-one score. Hello?!

CRYSTAL: (*pauses, looks out dreamily*) We're not that same miserable team, Jane. It's different now. This year we have spirit. We have drive. We have...

CRYSTAL and JANE: (*look at each other, CRYSTAL gives in*) No reasonable chance whatsoever.

BOTH stroll toward exit, SL. ASHLEY and MELANIE enter, SL, pantomiming conversation.

CRYSTAL: We still have to write an article on Chicaloo's football team.

JANE: I'll write it. I lie better than you. (*unexcited, hands pumping air mockingly*) Rah, rah, rah... go Chicaloo Chickens.

CRYSTAL laughs. CRYSTAL and JANE now break into mimed conversation as THEY continue to exit. After a short pause, ASHLEY and MELANIE break from pantomime and begin to speak.

ASHLEY: Ms. Kasey is furious... says she didn't go to college all those years just to teach nursery school.

MELANIE: Is the football team really *that* dumb?

ASHLEY: Honey, they have the collective IQ's of a potted plant. Everyone knows the cheerleaders do all their homework for them, and they still barely pass.

MELANIE: Is that why we're reading *A Tale of Two Cities* while the football jocks read *Hank the Cowdog*?

ASHLEY: Sure. Ms. Kasey knows she has to pass them somehow. Otherwise, all of Coach Murphy's best players will be off the team.

MELANIE: (*confused*) Huh? I don't get it.

ASHLEY: Exactly! Good impersonation of our glorious star quarterback, (*makes throwing stance*) Tommy Don Wallace.

MELANIE: Born with a golden arm.

ASHLEY: And an empty head.

MELANIE: But totally cool.

ASHLEY: Oh, totally. But Tommy Don is limited in plays he can remember.

ASHLEY and MELANIE stroll toward exit, SR, as LAURA, HANNAH, and CHERYL enter, SR, miming conversation. CHERYL carries pen and notepad.

MELANIE: Can't someone in the huddle help him remember plays? Can't Mo help him?

ASHLEY: Mo? Motown Rivers? Chicaloo's dynamic but dimwitted running back? He just has *one* play to remember.

MELANIE: Yeah.

ASHLEY and MELANIE: (*imitates*) Run, Forrest, run! (*BOTH laugh, exit*)

CHERYL: (*reading*) "List three examples of irony in the book *Hank the Cowdog*."

HANNAH: This is crazy. We should be doing our own homework.

LAURA: Instead, we're reading about dirty, stinky cowdogs so our boyfriends can pass English class.

HANNAH: Wait'll next quarter. We have to read *Madame Bovary*, and they get to read *Spider-Man*.

LAURA: The comic book!?!)

HANNAH: How's that for irony?

CHERYL: (*still reading*) "Who is the antagonist in *Hank the Cowdog*? What is his relationship to the protagonist?"

LAURA: (*overlapping CHERYL's previous sentence*) Who cares? I can't concentrate on cowdogs right now. We need some fresh cheers for Friday's game.

CHERYL: If the boys fail, Chicaloo will have to forfeit the whole season. There'll be no more games.

HANNAH: And then... I'll have no one to cheer for but my mother. (*staring out, as if reliving a nightmare... slowly builds in intensity*) If she can't watch me at the game, she makes me cheer in the kitchen, directly in front of our huge bay window. Then she starts cheering with me. And... (*beat... moves forward*) ...she goes crazy. This nice, quiet mom, she just loses it. She starts cheering for the Chickens, and pretty soon, all the neighbors start peeking inside... laughing and making fun of us. (*beat*) And does she mind? Oh, no. Mom, she *loves* the attention. (*hands under arms, imitates chicken*) And the neighbors, they all make chicken sounds. And they call me... (*breaks down*) ...fried chicken girl!

LAURA and CHERYL: Like, weird!

LAURA: (*hands HANNAH a tissue*) Well, that's *your* crazy neighborhood. They're not laughing at you from the stands.

CHERYL: Yeah, Hannah. You should be proud.

LAURA: We're the Chicaloo Fighting Chicks. We're loved...

CHERYL: ...feared.

LAURA: ...adored. We're like totally respected.

CHERYL: Oh, totally.

LAURA: No matter what everyone says.

HANNAH: Thanks, guys. It's just tough being a chicken.

LAURA: A Chick, Hannah. A Fighting Chick. A Fighting Chick representing the proud Fighting Chickens!!

LAURA and CHERYL get into cheering stance, and HANNAH rushes to join them. LAURA is in the middle. CHERYL still holds her pad.

(*preparing for cheer*) Okay, let's go!

ALL CHICKS: Our cluckin's really suckin'

HANNAH: And our doodle do is done,

CHERYL: It's tough to be a chicken

LAURA: When your team has never won! (*ALL jump a bit, ad lib "Go team, go," etc., then CHERYL stops.*)

CHERYL: (*reading again*) Try this one, guys. “Explain the climax of *Hank the Cowdog*.”

ALL shrug as lights go down.

ACT 1, SCENE 2

AT RISE: MS. KASEY’s classroom. Curtain opens. Lights up on MS. KASEY, standing in front of class, with a small desk behind her, stacked with paper. Students are seated in chairs or desks; in back are TOMMY DON, with LAURA directly in front of him; MO, with HANNAH directly in front of him; CHUCK, with CHERYL in front of him. Other seats, filled up in front area by LOUIS, CRYSTAL, JANE, ASHLEY, and MELANIE. Extras may be used.

MS. KASEY: Class, today we’re going to talk about symbolism in *A Tale of Two Cities*... uh... and boys, we’ll discuss *Hank the Cowdog* as well.

TOMMY DON: (*high fives MO*) Cool! Are we ever going to see the movie, Ms. Kasey? I wanna see them cowdogs.

MO: Glance in the mirror, Tommy Don.

TOMMY DON: Don’t need no mirror, Motown. I see you just fine.

MS. KASEY: (*correcting*) Tommy Don, Mo... We always finish reading the book first. Then, and only then, can we watch the film for fun.

TOMMY DON: Why can’t we watch the flick first... catch all that knowledge? Then we can read the *book* for fun.

LOUIS: Cowdogs would fly if you ever read a book, Tommy Don.

CHUCK: (*beat*) Ought’a be illegal to read them big books you carry around, Louis. (*throws paper wad at LOUIS*)

MS. KASEY: (*threatening*) Chuck!

TOMMY DON: So whadd’a you say, Miss? Can we watch that there movie? We could make it a double feature and see “Spider-Man.”

MS. KASEY: Finish the book.

LOUIS: (*stands*) You tell them, Ms. Kasey.

MO: (*in mocking, falsetto voice*) You tell them, Ms. Kasey.

ALL laugh.

MS. KASEY: Settle down, class. (*annoyed*) Sit down, Louis. (*HE does*) All right. We’re having a pop quiz. We’ll see how much everyone knows. (*EVERYONE murmurs, ad-libs, “Aw,” “Not again,” “Give us a break,” etc. MS. KASEY passes out the quizzes.*) You can thank our cheerleaders, the Chicks, for not bothering to do their homework last night.

ALL: (*sarcastically*) Thanks, Chicks.

LOUIS: Thank you, chicken legs.

MS. KASEY: *(beat)* Louis! Be quiet.

Immediately all three PLAYERS come forward, turn in paper, take a seat.

Boys, you only had enough time to write your names. *(pause)* Well?

TOMMY DON: Don't remember nothin'.

MO: Me neither.

CHUCK: Quizzes ought'a be illegal.

TOMMY DON: When did you say we're gonna see that movie?

MS. KASEY: *(angrily)* Enough already! You boys haven't been fooling anyone... making "A's" on every homework paper, but failing every classroom assignment. I'm going to talk with Coach Murphy this afternoon. If I were you, boys, I would enjoy your last few days of football. You're not going to pass this class. When grades come out next week, you'll no longer be members of the Fighting Chickens.

LOUIS: *(uncomfortable pause)* That's okay, Ms. Kasey. They look more like members of the Fighting Chicks, anyway.

LOUIS laughs obnoxiously, but no one else laughs. MS. KASEY stares somberly at the shocked PLAYERS. Lights down. End of scene.

ACT 1, SCENE 3

AT RISE: Broadcast studio of Radio TFC; Spot on JORDAN. In all of JORDAN's broadcasts, a spot may be used, or the right side of the stage may be lit. If desired, the apron could be a permanent set-up for JORDAN.

JORDAN: Good evening, and welcome again to our broadcast of Chicaloo football on Radio TFC, home of the Chickens. I'm your feisty, fun, and fashionable hostess, Jordan J Jawbreaker. As we reach the closing minutes of the game, it's been another long, long, long, evening for our beloved Fighting Chickens. The score right now is Gators 103, Chickens nothing. But ladies and gentlemen, the score doesn't always tell the entire story. Our fine, feathered football friends, as usual, have played with heart. Tommy Don Wallace has thrown for over 500 yards tonight. Sure, 450 of those yards were to our opponents, the big bad, biting Gators. *(beat)* But hey, no one's perfect. If things stay as they are now, our fabulous fighting fowl will fall to zero wins and two losses for the season. The chance of a miraculous comeback seems unlikely, but there's still a minute and fifty-eight seconds left, so anything can happen. *(beat)* It's 103 – nothing, Gators in the lead.

Spot off; lights up, enter COACH MURPHY and TANNER, from SR. COACHES should seem to really watch the play, as the action moves on a play, or the eyes follow a thrown ball, etc. THEY should use the entire stage at times, pacing together, pacing opposite ways and then suddenly staring out at a focal point when action occurs. For the first five seconds, each COACH should yell instructions or encouraging comments, overlapping each other. This should be ad-libbed, but realistic. Then THEY should flow into the written dialogue.

MURPHY: *(toward field)* Come on, Mo. Ram it down their throats! *(to TANNER)* This is ridiculous. The Gators have their fourth string playing. Their middle linebacker is a girl... a girl, for crying out loud.

TANNER: *(beat)* Here's the play. *(claps)*

MURPHY: *(pauses, watching; this line and TANNER's next line should be spoken simultaneously)* Watch your blind side, Tommy Don. Someone keep an eye on that middle linebacker. Let's hustle, hustle, hustle!

TANNER: *(pauses, watching; this line and MURPHY's previous line should be spoken simultaneously)* We ain't at no picnic. Get out there and fight. Let's play some ball. Come on... let's go!

MURPHY: *(pauses, watching)* Get that first down. *(beat)* That's it. Go Motown.

TANNER: Go!

MURPHY: Drive it. Get around that end.

TANNER: Good. You've got it. Now follow your blockers. Follow your blockers.

MURPHY: *(beat)* Good. Now break back. Break back... *(beat)* ...the other way.

TANNER: You're almost to open field.

MURPHY: You see it!

TANNER: You've got it!

MURPHY: You're right there!

TANNER: All yours, baby!

MURPHY: Go!

TANNER: Go!

MURPHY and TANNER: *(jumping up and down)* Go... go! Yes... yes. It's... *(beat)* ...it's... *(BOTH cringe)* Eeee!

TANNER: Tackled.

MURPHY: For a loss.

MURPHY and TANNER: *(beat)* By the girl.

TANNER: *(pause, watches)* Show off! *(beat)* They're lining up again.

MURPHY: Tommy Don is going back to pass.

TANNER: The line is blocking for him.

MURPHY: He's showing a lot of poise back there... a lot of poise.

TANNER: He's set up in the pocket.

MURPHY: Look down field, Tommy Don. Look down field.

TANNER: The receiver is wide open.

MURPHY: He's wide, wide open.

TANNER: Nobody near him.

MURPHY: By his lonesome.

TANNER: Put it up.

MURPHY: Heave it, man.

TANNER: *(pause to watch)* He's raring back, Coach.

MURPHY: He sees the receiver.

TANNER: Has him in his sites.

MURPHY: Tommy Don has a bead on him.

TANNER: *(BOTH jumping up and down)* Go Tommy Don.

MURPHY: Go Tommy Don.

MURPHY and TANNER: Go... go... go!

MURPHY: Pass that ball!

TANNER: Throw it now!

MURPHY: Put it up!

TANNER: You've got it, baby. You've got it!

MURPHY: This is it.

TANNER: The big six.

MURPHY and TANNER: It's... it's... *(stop jumping)* Eeee!

MURPHY: Sacked.

TANNER: For a loss.

MURPHY and TANNER: *(beat)* By the girl.

MURPHY: *(pause)* I hate her.

TANNER: *(beat)* Probably on steroids.

MURPHY: *(deadpan)* Doubt it. She weighs 90 pounds... *(beat)* ...in full pads.

TANNER: *(pause, as THEY watch)* It's 3rd down and 25.

ALL CHICKS: *(enter, cheering)* She's 90 pounds in pads,

CHERYL: But she's running down our lads.

HANNAH: She'll score more in a day I fear,

LAURA: Than we've put on the board all year.

HANNAH: *(claps and cheers a bit... to others)* She's on defense, and she's made four touchdowns. How does that happen? *(OTHERS shrug)*

CHICKS exit; COACHES shake heads, annoyed.

MURPHY: Look... the play's starting. *(beat)* Tommy Don's going back to pass.

TANNER: Hope he actually throws it this time.

MURPHY: Tommy Don! Don't hold the ball. Don't hold it. Pass that ball.
Pass it!

TANNER: He looks like he's really going to throw it this time.

MURPHY: His arm is back.

TANNER: He's setting his feet.

MURPHY: He has a target.

TANNER: Throw it.

MURPHY: Throw it.

MURPHY and TANNER: Pass that ball!

TANNER: *(pause)* Oh no! That girl is breaking through the line.

MURPHY: *(beat)* Block her! Somebody block the girl! *(beat)* Not you, Tommy Don! *You* throw the ball. *(beat)* Stop flirting with her. *(pause, throws hat down in anger)* She's the enemy! *(beat)* I don't care if you like curly blonde hair. Throw the football, Tommy Don!

TANNER: *(beat)* Look! He's ready now.

MURPHY: He's set!

TANNER: Tommy Don sees him... a wide open receiver!

MURPHY: Pass that ball!

TANNER: *(jumping up and down)* This is it!

MURPHY: He's throwing it! He's throwing it!

TANNER: I smell six on the scoreboard!

MURPHY and TANNER: *(beat)* Go Tommy Don! Go! Throw the ball!

MURPHY: *(beat... ball is thrown from offstage to MURPHY)* Oh, for the love of Pete. *(yells)* You're not supposed to throw it to me. *(deflated)* Aw, Tommy Don.

TANNER: *(deflated also)* Game's over. They gave it a good effort.

MURPHY: *(without enthusiasm)* Yeah, I guess they did. Well, let's pack it in. *(toward field, gestures)* Boys... This way, boys. We're over here. *(beat)* You're going toward the Gators' side. *(pauses, listening)* I don't care if she is cute, Tommy Don. Was she cute when she body-slammed you?

CHICKS, LAURA, HANNAH, CHERYL, enter, cheering, oblivious to the loss.

LAURA: Let's do one for Coach, girls.

CHICKS: *(THEY line up, count off)* Who's the best Chicken coach of them all? He coaches and he fights and he *(put hands under arms and imitate chickens)* squawk, squawk, squawks! Who's the chickenest coach? *(bends down, raises arms to sky)* Coooooach Murphy. And Coooooach Tanner. *(ALL jumping around, ad-libbing. "Get excited," "Woo-Hoo," "Go Chickens," etc.)*

MURPHY: Game is over, girls. We laid a big fat chicken egg. You can kindly stop cheering now.

LAURA: (*too excited*) We may have lost, but that fighting spirit is never beat.

HANNAH: Woo-Hoo! Go Chickens!

MURPHY: (*ignoring them, to TANNER*) This could be our final ball game, Tanner. If those boys fail... (*shakes head, thinking; beat*) ...I certainly hope Ms. Kasey won't flunk our guys like she's saying.

HANNAH: (*drops to knees in front of MURPHY*) Don't let her, Coach. Don't let her fail them. We don't have enough players. We'll have to forfeit the season. Then... (*rises, looks out, horror on face*) ...every Friday night... (*beat*) ...the real nightmare begins. Mommy cheerleader! (*beat*) The horror! The inhumanity!

LAURA and CHERYL: (*bored, rolling eyes*) The Fried Chicken Girl.

HANNAH: (*pause, then desperately*) You have to stop Ms. Kasey, Coach. My mom has already dusted off her 1998 cheerleading outfit for next time. It's three sizes too small. I can't handle the embarrassment. My life will be over.

MURPHY: (*hand on shoulder*) Chill out, Hannah. Just relax. I'll do my best. But it's all up to Ms. Kasey now. Hopefully she'll be fair.

HANNAH: (*cheering*) Ms. Kasey, please be fair...

ALL CHICKS: ...please be fair... please be fair.

LAURA: What's that grey stuff in your hair..

ALL CHICKS: ...in your hair... in your hair! (*jump and ad-lib cheer*)

MURPHY: (*overlaps ad-lib cheering*) Stop it! Stop it, girls. Stop it! (*CHICKS stop. MURPHY waves toward unseen person in the audience, smiles*) Ha ha. Just a little joke, Ms. Kasey. (*beat*) No, you look very young... very young indeed. (*beat, listening*) No, they didn't mean it, Ms. Kasey. (*waving, smiling... turns to girls*) What are you trying to do... make the lady mad? For crying out loud!

PLAYERS, TOMMY DON, MO, CHUCK enter, jerseys, faces dirty, looking disheveled. Each CHICK dances around, holding hands with her boyfriend. LOUIS enters behind, carrying various pieces of equipment.

TOMMY DON: (*takes LAURA's hand*) Hey, Coach. Sorry about losing.

MO: We did better than last week, huh?

MURPHY: I'm proud of you guys.

TOMMY DON: We did good then?

MURPHY: I wouldn't exactly say that.

LOUIS: You lost 103 – zip. What's good about that?

TOMMY DON: Pipe down, weasel!

HANNAH: You did great, Motown.

LAURA: You too, Tommy Don.

CHERYL: You were wonderful, Chuck.

ALL exit; CHICKS cheer on their way out.

CHICKS: The Chickens are the best. The Chickens are the best. Gooo team!
Woo-Hoo! The Chickens are the best.

ACT 1, SCENE 4

AT RISE: Common athletic area; All CHICKS and PLAYERS: Chairs or a bench may be used, or some could sit on the ground. ALL look depressed.

MO: That wasn't a very good practice today.

TOMMY DON: Go figure. We've probably played our last game. On Friday, we'll forfeit the season.

LOUIS enters with a canister, something looking a bit mystical or scientific. OTHERS are downcast and ignore him.

LOUIS: I just saw Ms. Kasey in her room, making out tomorrow's big test. Looks like it will be easy... *(laughs)* ...for some people, that is.

MO: Want your head flushed in the toilet?

LOUIS: *(still laughing a bit, then serious)* No.

LAURA: What are you doing here, Louis?

LOUIS: Coach Murphy sent me to spray for bugs.

LAURA: You sprayed last week... and the week before. The place is still infested. Can't you do your job right?

LOUIS: It's that spray I've been using. Great for the environment... lousy for bug control. *(excited)* But not anymore. Coach let me into the science lab after practice. Thirty minutes alone with those chemicals, and I concocted the perfect bug spray. *(shakes the canister)*

TOMMY DON: Well, spray already, then scam!

LOUIS: Huh-uh. You'll all have to leave. This is strong stuff. I even have a timer for it so I can get out. It's kind of a bug bomb.

TOMMY DON: *We're* not getting out. Fighting Chickens don't run from a little bug spray.

LAURA: Maybe we'd better leave. I don't want to smell like bug poison.

TOMMY DON: You girls go on. We'd better hang back and figure out a plan.

LAURA: We'll see you later, guys. *(CHICKS exit, PLAYERS are depressed.)*

LOUIS: I'm telling you, you'd better leave. (*handles container*) I'm setting the timer as I speak.

TOMMY DON: Fix it and go!

MO: Get out!

LOUIS: (*sets bug formula on ground*) Bug bomb is set. I wouldn't hang around if I were you. (*exits*)

MO: Bug bomb... whoop-te-doo!

BOYS sit, heads down. Using sound effects, a loud explosion should be heard. Simultaneously, BOYS should fall to floor, and different lights, perhaps red, should be used. Dry ice could be used, but any mystic lighting will be effective. After a few seconds, BOYS slowly sit up. After a few more seconds the GIRLS and LOUIS enter, helping them up. After the explosion sound effect, it would be good to have a loud, constant irritating sound effect that continues to play, and slowly diminishes as GIRLS help BOYS into a seat, and ending as dialogue begins.

LAURA: (*slapping TOMMY DON's face lightly, as HE recovers*) Do I need to call 9-1-1? Wake up! Oh, please be okay.

HANNAH: (*shaking MO*) Can you hear me, Mo? Do you know who I am? Wake up! Wake up!

LOUIS: (*does a victory dance*) Wow! That's my best chemistry experiment ever.

LAURA: (*upset*) Great. They're dying. You've killed our boyfriends.

ALL CHICKS: Thanks, Louis.

LOUIS: Don't worry. If they're hurt, I'll take all three of you to the school dance.

CHERYL: As if!

LAURA: Look, they're coming around. Tommy?

TOMMY DON: Oh, hi Laura. What happened?

LAURA: You're okay, honey.

Lights should revert to normal about this time, and CHERYL should step off stage, get a cup of water, and give CHUCK a sip. GIRLS help the GUYS to their feet.

Can you stand up? Do you feel okay?

TOMMY DON: Yeah, I think so.

MO: (*standing*) I'm okay.

CHUCK: (*standing*) Me too.

LAURA: It was just Louis and his adolescent chemistry experiment. He almost killed you, but I doubt he hurt a single bug.

TOMMY DON: (*speaking intelligently*) The outcome was inevitable, I suppose. Science teaches us that for every action there's an equal and opposite reaction.

LAURA: (*concerned*) Tommy Don, you don't sound like yourself at all.

TOMMY DON: Actually, I feel great. My mind doesn't feel all cloudy like it usually does.

MO: Same here. It's like neurons are firing off in my cerebral cortex, sending signals everywhere. For the first time, I feel awake... alert.

CHUCK: My mind has never felt clearer.

MO and TOMMY DON nod, knowingly.

HANNAH: Whoa! Louis, what did you put in that bug concoction of yours?

LOUIS: Search me? I didn't keep track.

HANNAH: Well, something is wrong with them... way wrong.

TOMMY DON: Quite the antithesis.

LAURA: (*unbelieving*) Antithesis? What's going on, Louis? What have you done to my Tommy Don?

HANNAH: To my Motown?

CHERYL: To my Chuck?

LOUIS: Wow! If I figure out what I put in that spray, I'll win the Nobel Prize for Science.

HANNAH: (*grabs LOUIS by the shirt*) You'll win the heel of my shoe upside your head if you don't get them back to normal. (*lets him go*) And hurry. Mo has to get home and eat dinner. This is the night he watches wrestling on TV.

MO: Wrestling? Count me out, babe. That stuff is fake.

LOUIS: Wow! He *has* changed.

TOMMY DON: Let's go, guys. We can't be messing around here. Ignoring our school work could cause a swirling vortex of prolonged misery.

MO: That's right. I'm ready to crack those books.

CHUCK: (*high fives*) Let's get at it!

TOMMY DON: Can't believe it never occurred to me to simply read the book. What an idiot I was.

MO: You sure were. (*PLAYERS laugh, slap each other on back.*)

TOMMY DON: See you tomorrow, girls. We'll be pulling a late-night study session.

LAURA: This is wonderful. If you boys study and pass that test tomorrow, you'll save the season for our Chickens.

HANNAH: Boy, will Ms. Kasey be surprised.

ALL CHICKS: (*PLAYERS exit happily to the cheers of CHICKS*) You can do it. Pass that test. Save our Chickens. They're the best. Pass that, pass that, mighty test. (*CHICKS hug, ad-lib, then see LOUIS, and stop*)

LAURA: Louis, I don't know what you did or how you did it, but you may have saved the entire season for our Fighting Chickens.

All CHICKS rush to LOUIS, hug him, tussle his hair, then quickly exit, leaving LOUIS shocked and staggering a bit.

LOUIS: (*pulls himself together, fixes hair, and smiles; calls off to GIRLS*) Well, since those guys are studying... uh... (*clears throat*) I'm free tonight, girls. (*rushes off after CHICKS*)

ACT 1, SCENE 5

AT RISE: COACH's office. This quick scene can be played at edge of stage, with spot or directed lights, or in front of curtain. BOTH pace as THEY speak.

MURPHY: (*looks at watch*) Five minutes. Five minutes until Ms. Kasey gives her test. Five minutes until our season officially ends.

TANNER: (*BOTH off in own world*) Such promise.

MURPHY: It could have been a great year.

TANNER: One of the best.

MURPHY: I'll miss those beautiful 80 yard runs from scrimmage.

TANNER: The last second touchdown passes.

MURPHY: Those two minute drills.

TANNER: Hail Mary's.

MURPHY: Endzone dances.

TANNER: Uh, Coach.

MURPHY: Leading the league.

TANNER: Coach!

MURPHY: Then... (*hands over heart, proudly*) A Chicken Championship.

TANNER: (*taps on shoulder*) Coach, we're 0-2. We probably would have lost all the rest... like we always do.

MURPHY: (*sadly*) I know. But we weren't out of it yet. (*sighs*) Such dreams.

TANNER: It's okay. Our Chickens will be back next year.

MURPHY: Will you read me some of that *Chicken Soup for the Coach*?

TANNER: (*patting MURPHY on the back*) Sure Coach. It'll be okay. It'll be okay.

ACT 1, SCENE 6

AT RISE: Lights come up or curtain opens on MS. KASEY's classroom. All STUDENTS are seated and MS. KASEY is passing out tests as SHE talks.

MS. KASEY: Don't turn your test over until I say to begin. The season is on the line, boys. I hope you'll give it your best shot. (*sighs, pauses*) I'm sorry it had to come down to this. (*to ALL*) You may turn over the test and begin.

BOYS write furiously as MS. KASEY paces in front. After a few seconds, the CHICKS stand halfway up, and in a stage whisper, start cheering.

ALL CHICKS: (*in stage whisper*) Chicken boys, Chicken boys, you are the best. We know you can pass that test. (*repeats two or three times, getting progressively louder, pumping fists in the air, etc. Finally MS. KASEY comes to her senses, claps hands for attention.*)

MS. KASEY: Class! Class! Sit down, students! This is a classroom and you're taking a test. This is not a pep rally! (*STUDENTS sit*)

LAURA: Sorry, Ms. Kasey. We weren't thinking.

LOUIS: (*sarcastically*) What a shocker!

MS. KASEY: (*clears throat, collects herself*) Proceed with the test, please.

All three PLAYERS rise together and hand papers to a shocked MS. KASEY, returning to seats.

Is this it? You're turning them in already? Are you not even going to try? Boys, you've put me in no-win situation. (*waving the papers, threatening*) Couldn't you have worked a little longer? Couldn't you have made a teeny tiny effort?! (*TOMMY DON raises hand; annoyed*) What, Tommy Don?!

TOMMY DON: Can you grade them?

MS. KASEY: What?

TOMMY DON: Can you grade our tests? I'd like to know how we fared on this fine evaluation of our literary skills.

MS. KASEY: (*confused*) Huh? (*glances at papers in astonishment... pause... suddenly becomes angry*) How did you do it?

TOMMY DON: Excuse me?

MS. KASEY: How did you cheat? Who did you copy from?

LOUIS: They can't copy from anyone. They're the only ones taking the cowdog test.

MS. KASEY: Quiet, Louis. I want to know, boys. What did you do? Steal the answer sheet? Louis, *you're* sneaky. Did you help them?

TOMMY DON: (*raises hand*) Ms. Kasey? For a simple book, I thought the story contained some terrific irony.

MO: I saw Hank as a perfect symbol of modern man.

CHUCK: I quite agree. It's a wonderful parody of human behavior.

TOMMY DON: The symbolism is unnerving.

MO: But effective.

TOMMY DON: True... true.

MS. KASEY: (*confused*) How could you know all of this? Are you saying you actually...

TOMMY DON: Read the book? Every word of it. We all did. I hope we passed, Ms. Kasey. And I apologize for our poor efforts in the past.

MS. KASEY: (*looks at each paper a couple of seconds, then holds them in air*) Perfect score... all of them. You're all passing my class. Woo-hoo!

STUDENTS ad-lib; "The season is saved," "They passed," "Chickens rule," etc... lots of high fives, hugs, handshakes. Be creative. CHICKS should lead ALL toward exit, SR.

ALL CHICKS: Chickens, chickens, you're the best. You just passed that big ole' test. (*jump and celebrate on first cheer, then repeat the cheer a couple more times until ALL have reached exit*)

ACT 1, SCENE 7

Lights up, SL, on DIRECTOR, GIRL 1 and BOY.

DIRECTOR: TFC commercial, take three! (*claps wooden clapper; exits*)

GIRL 1: Hey! Are you new in town?

BOY: My family just moved here last week.

GIRL 1: Great... maybe I could show you around.

BOY: Sounds totally cool.

GIRL 1: Do you like movies?

BOY: Love 'em. Especially scary ones.

GIRL 1: Me too.

BOY: I *really* love skating though.

GIRL 1: Unbelievable... it's my favorite.

BOY: What's your favorite color? Mine is...

BOY and GIRL 1: Blue.

GIRL 1: What's your favorite ice cream? Mine is...

BOY and GIRL 1: Vanilla.

BOY: What's your favorite rapper? Mine is...

BOY and GIRL 1: Jay-Z (*or substitute another rapper*)

BOY: Dude!

GIRL 1: This has never happened to me before.

BOY: And so quickly.

GIRL 1: (*THEY move toward each other, clasping hands.*) It's meant to be.

BOY: Until now, I've never found the right girl.

GIRL 1: (*move closer, like THEY're going to kiss*) It's right. I can feel it.

BOY: (*closer*) My heart is beating a hundred miles a minute. I think I... I...

GIRL 2: (*enters, with large handbag*) Hey guys! (*shocks them and THEY part a little. SHE walks between them, breaking the hand clasp*) You must be the new boy.

BOY: Uh... yes.

GIRL 2: I've heard sooo much about you.

GIRL 1: (*moves back in-between them*) Don't you have other people to bother? We've made a connection here... so go away.

GIRL 2: (*flirty, shakes his hand*) Why, I'm just trying to be neighborly. What's wrong with that?

GIRL 1: (*pulls their hands apart*) Plenty. Look... we have the same interests.

BOY: ...the same likes.

GIRL 1: ...the same dislikes.

BOY and GIRL 1: (*clasp hands again*) We're soul-mates.

GIRL 1: We'll be together always.

GIRL 2: Oh, well... cool. I just thought since you were new in town, the two of us could go on a picnic together.

GIRL 1: (*laughs*) A picnic... get real.

GIRL 2: (*takes box of TFC out of handbag*) Oh, and did I mention... we'll be eating TFC... Tennessee Fried Chicken... extra greasy.

BOY: (*releases GIRL 1's hand*) Extra greasy?

GIRL 2: With the Lieutenant's famous TFC biscuits. They're nose-lickin' good.

BOY: (*goes to GIRL 2 and grabs her hand*) What are we waiting for?

GIRL 1: You're kidding! What about me? (*to BOY*) How can you do this?

BOY: Watch a scary movie. You'll feel better.

GIRL 2: (*to audience, and imaginary camera... holds up box*) Eat TFC for every meal, and you'll always get the guy.

BOY: Eat anything else, and you'll be alone.

BOY and GIRL 2: (*points*) Like her.

THEY laugh as THEY exit, hand-in-hand. GIRL 1, open-mouthed, stares at them, and out at audience.

ACT 1, SCENE 8

Spot up, SR. for JORDAN.

JORDAN: Welcome back. This is Jordan J Jawbreaker here at Radio TFC, your home for all the exciting action of this year's Chicaloo Chickens. Scoreless for many years, tonight our miraculous Chicaloo Chickens have not only scored, they've put up 21 huge, huge points. Our very own Tommy Don Wallace has connected all night with Motown Rivers and Chuck Pace. All three team captains are playing inspired football, with an uncanny awareness of what the defense is doing. The Wily Wolves came in here expecting once again to break into our chicken coop, grab a couple of fat, juicy hens, and enjoy a feast. Instead, our restless roosters have pecked and scratched those wolves at every turn. But even with that great performance, it looks like our Chickens will once again go down in defeat. We're under two minutes left in the game, and the Wolves hold a three point lead, 24-21. Unfortunately, the Wolves have the ball and are running down the clock. But no matter what happens, this is a proud night in Chicken-land.

Spot off JORDAN, who exits, and lights up on COACH MURPHY and COACH TANNER.

MURPHY: *(clapping)* Come on. You gotta stop them. Stop those wolves.

TANNER: Make the tackle. Get in there and hit 'em.

MURPHY: *(beat)* You got 'em. Wrap him up. *(BOTH clap)* Good tackle. That's the way to do it, Mo. *(to TANNER)* It's a shame to see our boys play this well and still lose.

TANNER: I don't know what Louis put in that bug spray, but Tommy Don has been amazing tonight.

MURPHY: It's like everything just suddenly snapped together for him.

TANNER: Like someone flipped the "on" switch in his brain.

MURPHY: Same with Mo and Chuck. I can't believe Chuck actually caught two touchdown passes.

TANNER: *(laughing)* As Chuck used to say...

MURPHY and TANNER: *(dumb jock voice)* Ought'a be illegal. *(BOTH laugh)*

MURPHY: *(pause, watching play... disappointed)* Wolves just made a first down. No way to stop them now.

A whistle is heard. Enter TOMMY DON, MO and CHUCK, disheveled from the game. Both COACHES clap.

Good job, boys. Way to hang in there. We were close. We'll get 'em next week.

TOMMY DON: (*excited*) Coach, we're going to win this game!

MO: We can't give up now.

MURPHY: That's the attitude.

TOMMY DON: It's not attitude, Coach. We've got a plan... a good plan. We can get the ball back... guaranteed.

CHUCK: We discussed it on the way back to the sidelines.

TOMMY DON: Mo has been studying the footwork of the opposing running back. Each time he runs off tackle, the fourth finger on his left hand separates from his third finger an extra 2.2 centimeters just prior to the moment he cuts back.

MO: You see what that means? We know the exact moment he'll be cutting back.

TOMMY DON: Next time he runs off tackle, the three of us will be right there, waiting for him.

ALL PLAYERS: A regular chicken reunion. (*PLAYERS high five; exit*)

MURPHY: (*shakes head*) Poor boys. It looks so easy to them.

TANNER: (*pause*) Okay, here's the play. Look, it's going to be a run. Their running back has the ball.

MURPHY: (*beat*) He takes a stutter-step. Wait... he's running left. (*beat*) No, he's running right.

TANNER: (*excited*) He's running off tackle. He's running off tackle, Coach!

MURPHY: Look, he's cutting back. He's cutting back!

TANNER: (*BOTH throw arms up*) They're waiting for him.

MURPHY: Beautiful! Right into the arms of Motown.

TANNER: Tommy Don and Chuck are there, too. They have him trapped.

MURPHY: Nowhere to go.

TANNER: Pinned to the wall.

MURPHY and TANNER: Chicken reunion! Woo-hoo!

TANNER: (*points*) Did you see that? Mo knocked the ball out!

MURPHY: He stripped the ball right out of that Wolf player's hand.

TANNER: (*excited*) It's on the ground! It's on the ground!

MURPHY: Free ball... free ball!

TANNER: Fall on it, Tommy Don!

MURPHY: Fall on it, Chuck!

MURPHY and TANNER: Recover that ball!

MURPHY: *(softly at first, and building from there)* I think he's got it. I think he's got it. *(beat)* Tanner, do you see that? *(arms up)* He's got it! He's got it!

MURPHY and TANNER: Mo recovered the ball! Woo-hoo! We've got the ball! *(in a mocking, sing-song voice)* We've got the ball! We've got the ball!

COACHES jump up and down, hug, or one could lift the other; TOMMY DON, MO and CHUCK enter.

TOMMY DON: We did it, Coach. We did it!

MURPHY: Great job, guys. But we're still behind. We have time for one play. Let's win this game.

TANNER: Might as well just throw it up, Tommy Don, and hope we get lucky.

ALL PLAYERS: *(disgusted)* Get lucky?

TOMMY DON: No such thing as luck.

MO: *(HE will recite several of these quotes. Each time, HE should look far off, strike a pose, and put hand to chest, statesman – like)* "Luck is no friend of the man of action... the man who stands in the trenches, fights the enemy, and protects our every freedom."

TOMMY DON: Abraham Lincoln, right?

MO: *(always points finger back at him, indicating correct answer)* Right.

TOMMY DON: Okay, let's try this. I'll send the fullback in motion to get a better angle on sealing the tackle. Chuck, I want you to seal off the cornerback. Mo, I'll fake the handoff. The safety will cover the other receiver, and you'll be all alone for six. Piece of cake. On one. *(ALL clap once)*

MURPHY: Uh... Tommy Don?

TOMMY DON: Trust me, Coach.

PLAYERS exit; LOUIS and CHICKS enter, cheering for PLAYERS.

MURPHY: *(rubbing hands, nervous)* Okay, here we go.

TANNER: There's the snap. He's going back to pass.

MURPHY: *(beat... horrified)* He fumbled! Tommy Don fumbled!

TANNER: Oh no! *(beat)* Wait! He scooped the ball up. He's got it, Coach. He's scrambling.

MURPHY: Mo's breaking away. He's wide open.

TANNER: Throw the ball, Tommy Don. Throw the ball.

MURPHY: And not to me!

TANNER: *(beat, gives MURPHY a look, looks back to game)* You have him wide open.

MURPHY: Free as a bird.

TANNER: Crank it up.

MURPHY: Let'er fly.

TANNER: Bombs away!

MURPHY: Throw that ball.

TANNER: Throw that ball.

MURPHY and TANNER: Pass that ball! Pass that ball!

MURPHY: *(pause)* It's up!

TANNER: And away.

MURPHY: A genuine beauty.

TANNER: Wait... It's gonna fall short. It's gonna fall short!

MURPHY: *(beat)* No. It's too far out. It's over his head!

TANNER: *(beat)* He's catching up. Mo's got his man beat.

MURPHY: He's streaking into the endzone!

TANNER: He's reaching.

MURPHY: He's grabbing.

TANNER: He's got it.

MURPHY and TANNER: *(beat... arms up)* Touchdown! Woo-hoo!

ALL celebrate. As things escalate, suddenly a long and loud whistle is heard. A yellow flag should be tossed on stage from the wings. The celebration should progressively turn to despair, as five more flags are thrown out, one at a time, with COACHES curiously watching each one, counting each on their fingers.

LAURA: What? What is it?

MURPHY: *(mortified)* Penalty. *(counting flags... perplexed)* Six penalties???

TANNER: How can it be?

MURPHY: My life is over. *(long pause, looking glum)*

TANNER: *(reads a flag)* Wait. There are six different flags, but these aren't from the Refs.

MURPHY: *(reads)* They're an advertisement from an amusement park!?!

TANNER: *(pause, as THEY look at each other, jaws dropping)* It's not a penalty?

MURPHY and TANNER: It's not a penalty! It's not a penalty!

MURPHY: Touchdown Chickens!

TANNER: Touchdown Chickens!

MURPHY and TANNER: Touchdown Chickens! *(BOTH with arms extended, wiggling fingers, running in circles)*

MURPHY: No more time on the clock. We win! We win! *(sing-songy)* We finally won a football game! We finally won a football game!

EVERYONE celebrates again, culminating with one COACH jumping into the OTHER's arms for a few seconds. PLAYERS enter and are mobbed. Other excited students may enter as well. CHICKS lead EVERYONE off stage as ALL exit, SL and THEY cheer until all are off.

CHICKS: Chicaloo Chickens, that's our name. We belong in the Hall of Fame. *(repeat)*

Lights out, and spot on JORDAN, SR.

JORDAN: This is Jordan J Jawbreaker, here at the final gun. It's a mob scene on the field. There's plenty of laughing, crying, and triumphant cheers, as tonight, our beloved Chickens earned their first victory since 2006. This evening, our birds refused to be plucked, refused to be fricasseed, refused to be beaten. What's more, unlike the 2006 victory, this time, the opponent's bus did *not*- I repeat, did *not* break down on the interstate. No forfeit here, baby! The wolves are limping off the field, licking their wounds. *(in baby voice)* Jordan is so sorry-worry for the poor little wolfies. *(laughs)* Until next time, this is the feisty, fun, and fashionable Jordan J Jawbreaker, at Radio TFC.

ACT 1, SCENE 9

Lights come up again on SR, as DIRECTOR, GIRL 1 and BOY enter.

DIRECTOR: *(annoyed)* TFC commercial... Take one hundred & eighty nine *(claps clapper, exits)*

GIRL 1: *(holding a box of TFC behind her back)* Hey! Whatch'a doin'?

BOY: Nothing much. Just hanging out.

GIRL 1: Well, I wasn't doing anything, and I thought, if you weren't busy, we could have... *(shows box of TFC)* ...dinner!

BOY: *(eyes light up)* Tennessee Fried Chicken! Now you're talking my language.

GIRL 1: Extra greasy... six whole pieces... and those biscuits you like so much.

BOY: Oh boy! I'm ready. My place or yours?

GIRL 1: Either is fine by me. How about skating afterward?

BOY: Count me in!

GIRL 1: I've got some Jay-Z music.

BOY: Awesome. Let's jam!

GIRL 2: (*enters*) Hey guys. (*to BOY*) What are we doing tonight, babe?

GIRL 1: *We're eating with the Lieutenant tonight. (shows box... in mock sympathy)* Six whole pieces. Guess you'll be dining alone for the evening. Poor, poor girl.

GIRL 2: (*as SHE walks back to exit and grabs something*) Yes, I'll be all alone... (*brings out large bucket, with TFC painted in bold letters*) ...with my 80 piece bucket of TFC... 40 original recipe and 40 extra greasy...

GIRL 1: (*in disbelief*) An 80 piece meal?!

GIRL 2: With about 75 hot, delicious biscuits... each one a nose-lickin' treat.

GIRL 1: But that costs 100 bucks!

GIRL 2: Money well spent. (*BOY moves over to GIRL 2*) At least *I* won't be alone for the evening.

BOY: (*takes bucket and toward audience; can sing if desired*) Give me that lip lickin', fat drippin', oil slickin', butt kickin' TFC fried chicken.

GIRL 2: And try our delicious fried chicken milkshake. Mmm... mmm.

BOY: (*taking GIRL 2's hand*) Don't be cheap and buy the six piece meal.

GIRL 2: You can do better.

BOY: I know I did!

BOTH exit, as GIRL 1 stares open-mouthed at them and back at audience.

ACT 1, SCENE 10

AT RISE: MS. KASEY stands in front of class. The BOYS sit at the very front, with each GIRLFRIEND in the seat behind.

TOMMY DON: Ms. Kasey, I'm curious to know. When Thoreau writes of Walden Pond, there's an almost mystic quality of peace and reflection. Did he just write about these things, or were they mirrored in his personal life?

MS. KASEY: That's an excellent question, Tommy Don. I'm always glad to discuss literature.

COACH MURPHY and COACH TANNER enter.

Hello Coach Murphy... Coach Tanner. What can I do for you gentlemen?

MURPHY: We were just coming by to check up on our players.

MS. KASEY: (*laughs*) You don't have to worry, Coach. These last few weeks, your boys have become some of my finest students. But I do appreciate your coming by, and I want to thank you for encouraging them to take their academics seriously.

TOMMY DON: Coach, we've decided to read some additional books for extra credit. Kind'a make up for the work we *didn't* do before.

MO: It's fun. I never knew there was such adventure in reading. (*stands, hand on heart*) "I have not the time nor fortune for world-wide travel. I do have roughly the equivalent, however, in the world of books."

TOMMY DON: <*Name of a teacher at your school*>, right?

MO: Right.

MS. KASEY: (*pauses, a bit confused... then*) That's good, boys. That's good. It's fun having students who thirst after knowledge.

TOMMY DON: In that case, just call me a thirsty Chicken.

ALL laugh.

LAURA: I think it's cool to date a smart jock rather than a dumb one. The guys took us to a poetry reading after the game Friday. It was *sooo* romantic.

TOMMY DON: We figured the girls deserved a real date for once.

HANNAH: A week ago, I wouldn't have thought it was possible.

MO: (*holds HANNAH's hand*) Why shouldn't you be treated like a princess? You're possessed of a delicate beauty and charm, all your own.

HANNAH: (*blown away*) Wow! Who are you quoting?

MO: No one. Those are *my* words.

HANNAH: (*smiles lovingly*) Oh, Mo. You're wonderful.

CHUCK: (*takes CHERYL's hand, looks into eyes*) I look into your eyes, and it's as though they could penetrate the very depths of my soul.

CHERYL: Chuck, it's a whole new you. (*beat, happily*) And I *like* it.

TOMMY DON: (*takes LAURA's hand, stands*) "I am a random breeze on the ocean waves, and you're my ship... my anchor in life." It's a silly metaphor, but what I'm trying to say is, I care for you deeply, Laura.

ALL applaud.

CHUCK: (*waves hand*) Such hyperbole!

ALL laugh.

TOMMY DON: Coach, I couldn't be happier.

MO: Me, too.

CHUCK: Definitely.

LAURA: I can speak for us girls. We've never been treated this well.

MS. KASEY: I've never enjoyed teaching this much.

MURPHY: I wouldn't want to be anywhere else but here, coaching the best chickens in the world.

ALL PLAYERS: Hear, hear.

LOUIS: (*beat; stands, in a sarcastic tone, making fun of sugary speeches*) And little Tiny Tim has learned to walk, and he is going to live happily ever after. (*pretends to gag himself*)

Pause at first, then ALL grin; ad-lib, different ones comment, "Aw, Louis," "You're really asking for it," etc, ALL happily laughing. Someone may ruffle LOUIS' hair. Lights Down. Spot on JORDAN, SR.

JORDAN: (*sound effect of referee's gun*) And now we end another Friday together as the final gun sounds. Chicaloo has soundly defeated the Hanover Hippos by a lopsided score of 42-7. As of tonight's victory, the Chickens have won three-count 'em, three games in a row. Defenses can't find a way to stop the dynamic trio of Tommy Don Wallace, Mo Rivers, and Chuck Pace. And best of all, our beloved Chickens are only two games away from their first-ever district championship. (*beat*) Can they do it? You bet they can. And you can catch every play with me, your feisty, fun, and fashionable hostess, Jordan J Jawbreaker, here at Radio TFC, home of the soon-to-be champion Chicaloo Chickens. Ladies and gentlemen, our Chickens are finally coming home to roost.

ACT I, SCENE 11

AT RISE: CRYSTAL and JANE enter. SL, each carrying a mini-spiral.

CRYSTAL: We need to finish all these articles so we can go to press. What do you have so far?

JANE: (*stops, looks at mini-spiral*) Let's see. "Chickens only two wins away from first-ever championship." And... "Football captains suddenly join chess club, French club, forensic anthropology team, and Future Nuclear Physicists of America."

CRYSTAL: Now I'm trying to come up with an article for our gossip section.

JANE: How about this? Tommy Don Wallace steals Mo Rivers' girlfriend. Mo gets even and dates Tommy's girl.

CRYSTAL: (*confused*) Wait a minute. I saw Tommy Don and Laura together this morning.

JANE: (*as BOTH exit, SR*) Silly! It's a gossip column. It doesn't have to be true.

CRYSTAL: (*still confused*) Oh. (*pause, finally understanding*) Oh!

ASHLEY and MELANIE enter, SR, passing other girls, talking as THEY walk.

ASHLEY: Did you get a ticket for the game yet?

MELANIE: Of course. The whole town will be there.

ASHLEY: (*stops walking, pondering*) Melanie, do you think Tommy Don has changed?

MELANIE: Oh, definitely... Mo and Chuck, too. They're all acting weird... for guys, I mean. In homeroom this morning, Chuck asked if he could do a sculpture... of my hand. My hand, of all things. He said it had (*mocks a guy's voice*) many subtle nuances of form and texture.

ASHLEY: Like, crazy. He must be completely "losing it." All those guys have been acting bizarre the last few weeks.

MELANIE: Just hope we can win the championship before the men with the butterfly nets arrive!

ASHLEY: You can say *that* again. (*BOTH laugh*)

ACT I, SCENE 12

JORDAN: For years, opponents have plucked our chickens. But now these invincible roosters are crowing in the face of the enemy. (*A crowing sound effect may be used*) The Chickens are holding onto a small lead against last year's district champs, the Eaton Eagles. Our lead could have been extended, but Chuck Pace, who is a wide receiver *and* our place kicker, has missed every field goal tonight by hitting the very same spot on the goal post... almost like he was aiming there. (*beat*) So though they missed on all those scoring opportunities, our boys, with only minutes left in this game, are still clinging to a small lead against last year's champs.

Spot out on JORDAN. Curtain rises on COACH MURPHY and COACH TANNER.

MURPHY: (*clapping*) Let's go, guys. Show some attitude out there.

TANNER: Keep it up, Mo. Great run, man.

MURPHY: (*to TANNER*) Now explain what you were saying again.

TANNER: Well, the school psychiatrist gave the boys an IQ test, and all were genius level. And that's great. But she's given more tests, and it seems like their intelligence level is growing at an astounding rate... and they're already off the charts.

MURPHY: They keep getting smarter. So what?

TANNER: The psychological ramifications could be devastating for the boys.

MURPHY: Ah, phooey. That's all psychological mumbo jumbo. All I know is the boys are having fun, we're headed for a championship, and I'm soon to be crowned Coach of the Year.

Whistle sounds from offstage. MURPHY turns back to field.

What happened?

TANNER: Other team called a time out.

PLAYERS enter, breathing hard, looking disheveled, as COACHES clap.

MURPHY: Good job. You're all doing great. We've almost got this game won. But you're getting way too fancy with the plays, Tommy Don. We're ahead, so we just want to run out the clock... make good choices.

TOMMY DON: We *always* make good choices.

MO: *(looks straight ahead, hand on heart reciting)* "Two roads diverged in the woods... *(points both directions)* ...I took them both."

TOMMY DON: Jack Frost, right?

MO: Right.

MURPHY: Mo, let's keep the famous quotations to a minimum and the runs to a maximum... okay?

MO: I'm tired of running the ball... *(bored)* ...straight ahead, to the left, to the right. Where's the challenge?

MURPHY: You're kidding. This is football, man. It's the greatest challenge on earth.

TOMMY DON: *(pauses, snaps fingers)* I know. Let's run a trick play.

MURPHY: A trick play? When we're barely ahead?

TOMMY DON: Of course... why not?

MO: *(recites)* "The prize goes to the swift, the courageous, the brave of heart."

TOMMY DON: *<Name of a teacher at your school>*, right?

MO: Right.

TOMMY DON: Okay, Chuck, you line up on an angle between the first down marker and the broken board near the second set of bleachers. The trajectory of the ball will depend on the angle of the parabola. If you substitute 4 for x in the equation and divide the wind speed by the barometric pressure, the ball should fall slightly inside the 41 yard line, hitting you right in the hands... *(beat)* ...on two. *(PLAYERS clap once, break, and exit)*

MURPHY: *(as PLAYERS leave)* Hold on a second. That won't... *(THEY're gone)* ...work.

TANNER: Well, Coach. Looks like we're soon to find out.

MURPHY: *(frustrated)* What a time to get tricky.

TANNER: *(pause)* Here's the play. He's going back to pass.

MURPHY: *(beat)* Chuck has the angle... it's up... away.

MURPHY and TANNER: *(beat, following imaginary ball)* It's a catch!
(high five)

MURPHY: Att'a boy, Tommy Don. Att'a boy, Chuck. *(beat)* Amazing how they do that.

Sound of whistle from offstage; PLAYER's enter.

TANNER: Two-minute warning, Coach. *(COACHES clap)* Good job, guys. That was a gutsy play, Tommy Don.

MO: *(takes out a piece of paper)* You want to read a poem, Coach? I wrote it during the third quarter.

MURPHY: You wrote a poem?

TANNER: On the field?

MO: *(shrugs)* I got bored.

MURPHY: Bored! *(moving toward MO, angrily. TANNER holds him; HE regains composure)* I remember. You completely missed your block. Now I know why.

TANNER: That's unheard of!

MURPHY: It's outrageous!

MO: It's actually pretty good. *(quotes, as PLAYERS start to exit)* "A good poem is always worth a missed block."

TOMMY DON: George Washington, right?

MO: Right. *(PLAYERS exit.)*

TANNER: *(watches play for a few seconds, then looks confused)* What are they doing out there? Why is everyone shaking their heads? Coach, what's going on?

MURPHY: *(steps further DS, squinting, trying to figure out what's wrong)* Everyone looks confused out there.

TANNER: Tommy Don, Mo, and Chuck look ready. The rest of them aren't even lining up.

MURPHY: *(yells)* Line up! Line up for the play! *(beat)* They're just staring at Tommy Don. *(beat; to PLAYERS)* What's wrong? What's happening out there? *(pauses, listening)* What? *(pauses)* No. You can't be serious. *(pauses, then yells)* French? Tommy Don is calling the plays in French!?!

TANNER: *(Both COACHES slap hands to forehead and shake heads.)* Now I've truly seen everything.

MURPHY: *(yells)* Tommy Don... call it in English! *(jumping up and down in anger)* Call the play in English!

TOMMY DON: *(from offstage)* Viva la France!

TANNER: (*pause, shakes head, watches*) They're still confused. No one knows what to do.

MURPHY: Uh oh... Here's the play. (*pause, watching*) Ouch! Busted play! Busted play!

TANNER: The ball is on the ground.

MURPHY: Grab it. Fall on it.

TANNER: Fall on it, guys.

MURPHY and TANNER: Get that ball! Recover that ball!

MURPHY: (*beat*) Mo, put that pen and paper away. Go for the ball. (*desperately*) It's right at your feet! (*to TANNER, excitedly, pointing*) Mo sees the ball. He's bending down to pick it up!

TANNER: (*beat*) He's got the ball... he's up... he's looking... he's... he's...

MURPHY: (*beat*) ...tossing the ball away so he can write some more poetry.

TANNER: (*pause*) Look! One of the Eaton Eagles has the ball. (*beat*) He's getting up. (*beat*) He's racing toward the end zone.

MURPHY: No one's running after him. (*beat*) Ah, for crying out loud! Touchdown, Eaton Eagles. (*BOTH shake heads*) My dreams are slipping down the toilet. Oh my stars! Now we're behind by two points, and we only have a few seconds left.

TANNER: Defeated because our quarterback wouldn't speak English.

MURPHY and TANNER: (*shake heads*) Only in America.

PLAYERS enter.

TOMMY DON: (*waving*) Guten tag, Coach.

MURPHY: Guten tag?? (*looks up in disbelief*) Are you off your rocker?!

TOMMY DON: (*defensive gesture*) What? (*explaining*) You don't like me speaking *French*, so I thought...

MURPHY: (*yelling*) I don't want you speaking French *or* German! This is *American* football!

TOMMY DON: Calm down. I'm just trying to introduce some diversity to this team.

MURPHY: Diversity? I want to know why you're speaking French... (*yells*) ...in the huddle!?!

TOMMY DON: (*beat*) I thought about Mandarin Chinese at first.

MURPHY: (*throws hat on the ground in anger*) Well, think about English... Spanish... something the other players might understand!

TOMMY DON: Too passé.

MURPHY: (*about to explode*) Too... too... (*exasperated grunt*) Our season is going right off a cliff. We're now behind by two points because you can't speak English in the huddle, Tommy Don, and you Mo, can't be bothered to pick up a fumble... (*yells*) ...because you're *writing a poem!*

MO: *(beat)* Excuse me, Coach.

MURPHY: *(still angry)* What?

MO: I finished my poem... just as the other team was scoring. It's called *(hand on heart)* "Watching my opponent score." Would you like to hear it?

MURPHY: *(growling)*...R-r-r-r... *(to TANNER)* I'll be right back. *(exits)*

TOMMY DON and MO quickly get on either side of TANNER. As THEY teach TANNER, MO squeezes his mouth to help him purse his lips.

TOMMY DON: We'll give you a crash course in French.

MO: It's the language of love, Coach.

TOMMY DON: Let's start with a proper accent. Say *poseur*.

TANNER: *(confused, going along with it... in American accent)* Poser?

TOMMY DON: *(gestures)* *Poseur... poseur.* Purse the lips a little. *Poseur.*

TANNER: *(not good, but better; gestures also)* *Poseur.*

MO: You're getting there. Purse those lips. *(helps him)* *Poseur.*

TOMMY DON: This should help. *(pulls out a French beret or any small, funny-looking hat and places on TANNER's head in place of ball cap)*
Poseur.

TANNER: *Poseur.*

MURPHY enters. TOMMY DON and MO back off.

TANNER: *(still practicing)* *Poseur.* Coach, you are a *poseur*.

MURPHY: *TANNER!*

TANNER comes to himself and fumbles with and quickly removes hat.

(stares for a second, throws arms up in defeat, and paces as HE rants) I can't believe it. Our season is over. My dreams are crushed. We'll need a miracle to win this game. No championship, no coach of the year. We're doomed.

MO: If it's a miracle you want, it's a miracle you've got. Right guys?

TOMMY DON: We're up to the challenge, Coach. We're here to make it happen.

CHUCK: And that's not hyperbole.

MURPHY: Good. That's the spirit. Now let's do something simple and dependable... maybe the triple stretch play. Yeah, that's a good one.

TOMMY DON: *(to PLAYERS)* The way I see it, we need a big play... something unexpected. *(beat)* I'll take the angle that is formed when the sun strikes the moon, and divide by the shadows from clouds over the earth. That should form the perfect angle. Mo, you should make your turn just inside the 20 yard line, and the ball will be waiting for you. *(beat)* On one. *(ALL PLAYERS do single clap and exit)*

MURPHY: *(as PLAYERS exit)* Wait a minute. *(glances up)* I can't even see the moon.

TOMMY DON: *(from offstage)* You're not concentrating. Trust me.

MURPHY: My life is over. It's literally over.

TANNER: *(pause, looks at field)* They're lining up now. This is it. Cross your fingers.

MURPHY: *(beat, yells, throwing hands up)* Call the play in English, Tommy Don! *(beat)* No, I don't care if it's the language of barbarians. It's *your* language! *(to TANNER)* I'm going to choke him!

TANNER: It's okay. He's calling the play in English now. *(pause)* There he goes... he's back... he's looking... he's firing.

MURPHY: *(pause, watching)* Mo caught it... at the Eagles' 20 yard line! Just like Tommy Don said. *(pumped up)* Yes!

TANNER: *(claps, nods head)* That's what I'm talking about.

MURPHY: *(makes signal with hands)* Call a time out, Tommy Don.

Whistle from offstage; beat.

Good boy. Exactly three seconds left on the clock. Just enough time for Chuck to kick a field goal and win this game.

CHUCK enters.

This is it. Chuck, are you ready to kick the field goal?

CHUCK: *(shrugs, looking bored)* I don't know.

MURPHY: You don't know? The biggest moment in Chicaloo history, and you don't know!?

CHUCK: *(shrugs again)* I already nailed the goal post five times tonight. There's nothing else to prove.

MURPHY: You *meant* to hit the goal post?!

CHUCK: Of course. It's definitely not a challenge kicking *between* the goal posts. My mind and body are perfectly aligned. Even *hitting* the goal post is too easy now. I'll just sit this one out! *(starts to walk away)* Maybe I'll split the atom.

MURPHY: *(pulls CHUCK back)* You can't sit it out. We're depending on you.

Whistle is heard offstage.

TANNER: There it is... penalty for delay of game... five yards.

MURPHY: Chuck, you've got to do this for me... for us... for your teammates!

CHUCK: (*shrugs*) Mmmm... (*then suddenly excited*) I know. (*pulls out pencil and paper*) Stand still, Coach.

MURPHY: What?

CHUCK: I'll sketch you. You can put it up in your office. That place is totally devoid of culture.

MURPHY: (*points to field*) Get out there, Chuck!

CHUCK: You're moving. How can I be expected to draw you when you're moving?

Whistle blows.

TANNER: Another delay of game penalty... five more yards.

CHUCK: I'll draw you next, Coach Tanner. (*motions him to move*) Could you wait over there until I'm done, please?

MURPHY: Enough! I don't have time to argue with you, Chuck. (*pulls TANNER over*) You see this man... Coach Tanner? I'm sending him into the end zone stands, in the upper deck, right between the goal posts. Do you think you could kick that ball and nail him right in the center of the forehead? (*takes pieces of tape and makes an "X" on TANNER's forehead*)

CHUCK: (*excited*) Dude! Now that's a challenge.

MURPHY: Good boy. Off you go. (*CHUCK exits*) Tanner, you know where to go.

TANNER nods, gives thumbs up, and exits. CHUCK then returns, bends over like HE's in pain.

What's wrong, Chuck? Are you hurt?

CHUCK: No, Coach.

MURPHY: What's wrong, then?

CHUCK: (*straightens up, like HE's about to cry*) There's a homeless problem in America, and no one's paying attention.

MURPHY: (*almost speechless*) Are you kidding? (*yells*) Get out there and make that kick.

CHUCK: But Coach, they're not getting funded properly.

MURPHY: Sure they are. This is "kick a field goal for the homeless" week. Now go!

CHUCK exits.

CHUCK: *(enters again, giving MURPHY the paper)* We'll finish drawing your portrait after the game. I'll bill you for it later.

MURPHY: *(looks at paper, wads and tosses it behind him, shaking head)* Coach of the Year surely can't be worth all this.

Light down, spot on JORDAN, SR.

JORDAN: The kick is up, and it's... *(beat)* GOOD! *(sound effect of referee's gun)* As the gun sounds to end the game, our Fighting Chickens have come out on top once again. They've just won the game and defeated last year's district champions, as Chuck Pace kicked a picture perfect field goal. *(beat)* We'll be back next week for the season finale in our quest for a Chicken championship. Good night from Radio TFC. Go celebrate and have some delicious Tennessee Fried Chicken... it's nose-lickin' good! *(beat)* Wait a minute... they seem to be taking an injured man off the field... some guy from the end zone bleachers. *(shrugs)*

Optionally, someone can push TANNER across the stage in a rolling chair. TANNER should be wearing a huge bandage on his head.

LIGHTS DOWN

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