

# THE BIG PICTURE

## By Aland Haehnel

Copyright © 2005 by Alan Haehnel, All rights reserved.

ISBN 1-60003-041-6

**CAUTION:** Professionals and amateurs are hereby warned that this Work is subject to a royalty. This Work is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America and all countries with which the United States has reciprocal copyright relations, whether through bilateral or multilateral treaties or otherwise, and including, but not limited to, all countries covered by the Pan-American Copyright Convention, the Universal Copyright Convention and the Berne Convention.

**RIGHTS RESERVED:** All rights to this Work are strictly reserved, including professional and amateur stage performance rights. Also reserved are: motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, radio broadcasting, television, video or sound recording, all forms of mechanical or electronic reproduction, such as CD-ROM, CD-I, DVD, information and storage retrieval systems and photocopying, and the rights of translation into non-English languages.

**PERFORMANCE RIGHTS AND ROYALTY PAYMENTS:** All amateur and stock performance rights to this Work are controlled exclusively by Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. No amateur or stock production groups or individuals may perform this play without securing license and royalty arrangements in advance from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Questions concerning other rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC. Royalty fees are subject to change without notice. Professional and stock fees will be set upon application in accordance with your producing circumstances. Any licensing requests and inquiries relating to amateur and stock (professional) performance rights should be addressed to Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

Royalty of the required amount must be paid, whether the play is presented for charity or profit and whether or not admission is charged.

**AUTHOR CREDIT:** All groups or individuals receiving permission to produce this play must give the author(s) credit in any and all advertisement and publicity relating to the production of this play. The author's billing must appear directly below the title on a separate line where no other written matter appears. The name of the author(s) must be at least 50% as large as the title of the play. No person or entity may receive larger or more prominent credit than that which is given to the author(s).

**PUBLISHER CREDIT:** Whenever this play is produced, all programs, advertisements, flyers or other printed material must include the following notice:

***Produced by special arrangement with Brooklyn Publishers, LLC***

**COPYING:** Any unauthorized copying of this Work or excerpts from this Work is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this Work may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form, by any means now known or yet to be invented, including photocopying or scanning, without prior permission from Brooklyn Publishers, LLC.

## THE BIG PICTURE

by  
Alan Haehnel

### ***Cast: one male or one female***

I don't understand it. I mean, I think I have a fairly normal face. Nothing extraordinarily ugly about it. I suppose you could say there is nothing extraordinarily beautiful about it, either - depends who you ask, I guess. Either way, I think I fall in the average range when it comes to faces, and bodies for that matter. Nothing grotesque here, nothing that would make people run to the other side of the street when I came strolling down the sidewalk, right? I mean, sure, I get a pimple now and then, but it doesn't turn into a volcano at any point. I'm telling you, there is nothing seriously wrong with my looks!

So why is it? Can somebody tell me? Why is it that this fairly average face and body can become something so hideous, so ridiculous, so laughably, completely... out of whack just because a camera is pointed at it? I mean, think of the percentages here. I'm not a celebrity, so I don't have people poking cameras at me all the time. No, again, I'm average in that category, too. I have someone taking my picture – what - twice a month, maybe, if that often? That's like, I don't know,  $\frac{1}{2}$  of  $\frac{1}{2}$  of one percent of my total time in a month. So, the deal is, 99.99% of the time - I know the math is probably off... so sue me; you get the point - 99% of the time I am looking fairly normal. The camera comes out, somebody counts like they always do - 1, 2, 3 - or they say something stupid like "Say cheese!" or "Say spaghetti!" or something like that.

Why don't they have you say something really funny if they want you to smile, by the way? There is nothing all that funny about cheese or spaghetti. I suppose it's the group thing. If everybody around you is saying cheese or spaghetti, there's something funny about that, that you're all saying this thing out of the blue. But it's cliché by now, so nobody laughs or even smiles any more. Now, if they were to tell you, "Say Saskatchewan," that would be unexpected; that might get a laugh. Anyway, that's not my point! My point is: I am normal! I am normal in looks until the split second before the picture is taken! And then... pow! (***Freezes, as if HE has become a photograph. His face is distorted.***) Bam! (***Another picture with a different horrible look.***) Whack! (***A third shot.***) In that fraction of a second while the finger of the photographer is pressing on the button, I go from this... (***poses, smiling normally***) to this! (***poses, looking ridiculous***)

Now, you think I'm exaggerating. You think this is like when kids bring home their school pictures and they don't want to show them to anybody just because that's how you're supposed to be with school pictures, right?

## The Big Picture – Page 3

**(acting like two young children with school pictures)** “Let me see your picture, Sally.” “No, I look bad. Let me see yours.” “No way! I look like a freak!” “My hair was sticking up all over the place. Just let me see.” “It can’t be as bad as mine. I think the photo guy must have been drunk or something.” “I’ll show you mine if you show me yours!” And then they have to do the counting thing, you know. “Okay, on three, you show and I’ll show! But you can’t laugh! 1... 2... 3!” **(pantomimes the showing of the pictures)** Then, of course, they look at the other person’s picture and they say, “That looks good! That’s good!” “No, I look like a geek-a-zoid. But you look great! Let me have one.” Then they exchange wallet-sized pictures with writing on the back about being best friends forever and don’t you ever change who you are and yada, yada, yada.

Then they go home and do the whole thing over again with their parents. “No, Momma, they turned out bad! I have to have retakes!” **(as mom)** “Oh, come on, they’re not that bad. Let me see.” **(child)** “No, they’re horrible!” **(mom)** “Young lady, I paid for those pictures, so I am certainly not going to let you keep them from me. Show me.” **(whining child)** “But, Mooooom!” **(mom)** “Now!” Then Mom gets ahold of the pictures and she cries and she says, “Oh, Baby, these are wonderful. I’m going to send an 8x10 to your Grandmother Riley and the 3x5 to your Uncle Ronald and...” and on and on and on trying to decide which relative gets which dimension of photograph, as if Grandmother Guggenheimer from East Overshoe is going to disown the woman if she sends anything smaller than a four by eight foot school portrait of her twelfth grandchild.

You get the picture, pardon the pun. That is the normal happening. You may think that my experience is something like what I have just been describing. Wrong. When I used to do those school picture exchanges - early on, before I had learned the awful truth - I would do the “you show me and I’ll show you” arrangement; I would do the counting - 1, 2, 3; I would see the other person’s picture; I would look up to say, “That looks just like you. That’s good!” and I would find the other kid, who had just looked at my school photograph, vomiting into the bushes. Home was worse. First grade, the reaction was something like this: “I paid for those pictures, so you are going to let me see them... now! **(pantomimes getting the picture, looking at it)** Oh, that is disgusting!” First grade, mind you. I was six years old. Having your own mother look at your photo and call it disgusting is generally not what child psychologists mean when they refer to a nurturing, caring environment. Second grade: “Now, how in heaven’s name did you make your face do that?”

Listen, my mother is a wonderful person. She used to bake whoopee pies for all the neighborhood children and she didn’t charge them a cent. This is not some evil woman I’m talking about here, but even she, who some call a saint, looked at my third grade school photograph and said to my

father: “Herbert, I don’t have the stomach for this. Next year, you’re dealing with his school photos.” And next year, he did. I brought him the photo, and he kicked the dog. The first and last act of violence in Herbert’s entire life, and it was my photograph that drove him to it. After fifth grade when neither of my parents would speak to me for two days after I brought the wretched things home, that was it. I was guaranteed sick every photo day through middle school and on into high school. I didn’t have a choice in the matter. Every September, I would wake up on a certain day and my mother and father would both come in my room and announce, somberly, “You’re sick today.” Once a year, on photo day, regardless of how I was feeling, I was sick. Period. No negotiations.

***Thank you for reading this free excerpt from THE BIG PICTURE by Alan Haehnel. For performance rights and/or a complete copy of the script, please contact us at:***

**Brooklyn Publishers, LLC**

**P.O. Box 248 • Cedar Rapids, Iowa 52406**

**Toll Free: 1-888-473-8521 • Fax (319) 368-8011**

**[www.brookpub.com](http://www.brookpub.com)**