

THE BLOODY ATTACK OF THE EVIL, DEMONIC GIRAFFE PUPPET (ONE-ACT VERSION) By Bradley Walton

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CHARACTERS

(8-13 performers possible: 3 males, 3-4 females, 2-6 either)

RUPERT NEWELL (M) – A good-hearted teenager who sees his new video camera as a force to improve in the world. He is extremely intelligent and has grand ambitions and a fair amount of gumption, but is also weak-willed and has no leadership skills.

CLIFF SPALL (F) – Rupert's best friend. Smart, assertive, and slightly warped. Is drawn to Rupert's positive qualities, but is constantly exasperated by his negatives.

VIRGINIA PHELPS (F) – a dim-witted, militant, holier-than-thou vegan.

JACK FELTON (M) – A football player who antagonizes Rupert. Forced to participate in Rupert's film as a punishment.

ALICE MASON (M) – An imposing, overbearing redneck who lives in his own reality and thinks he knows everything about film.

TIANA BUCKLE (F) – An obsessive and ditzzy manga (Japanese comics) fan.

MARGERY / MARTIN PATTINSON (M or F) – in charge of the film contest.

JOSHUA / JENNIFER LUCAS (M or F) – a contestant in the film contest.

MATILDA WILLIAMS (F) – a contestant in the film contest.

DORA / DAVID WEBBER (M or F) – a contestant in the film contest.

JUDGE #1 (M or F)

JUDGE #2 (M or F)

JUDGE #3 (M or F)

DOUBLING

The actors in the roles of VIRGINIA, JACK, ALICE, TIANA, and (with a very quick costume change) CLIFF can double as LUCAS, MATILDA, WEBBER, the three JUDGES, or PATTINSON.

FILM CAST

The roles played in the film by the characters in the play

RUPERT – David

CLIFF – Voice of The Puppet / Sally

TIANA – Catherine / Great Spiritual Old Guy

JACK – Bob / Max / leprechauns

ALICE – Detective Portman / Chris / leprechauns

VIRGINIA – Detective Jones

LUCAS, MATILDA, and WEBBER – can appear as library patrons in the library scene (optional)

JUDGES 1, 2, and 3 – library ninjas

SPECIAL NEEDS

The equipment and know-how to film, edit and project a short movie with sound.

SETTING

A medium-sized American town, late autumn. Ideally, the play occurs in the “present” year. However, if references in the play become dated and a year needs to be established, then the play occurs in 2005.

STAGING

Staging is simple. There are two scenes at a film contest requiring a screen and 8 chairs; three scenes in a cafeteria requiring a table and 6 chairs; and three outdoor scenes that can be performed on a bare stage (or with optional trees, etc. if the director desires).

Lists of costumes and properties for both the play and the movie, and a list of general filming locations can be found at the end of the script.

SCENES

SCENE 1: The film contest

RUPERT, LUCAS, MATILDA, WEBBER, PATTINSON, 3 JUDGES

SCENE 2: The school cafeteria, about two weeks earlier

RUPERT, CLIFF, VIRGINIA, JACK

SCENE 3: Walking home from school through the woods, that afternoon

RUPERT, CLIFF

SCENE 4: The cafeteria after school, a few days later

RUPERT, CLIFF, TIANA, VIRGINIA, JACK

SCENE 5: The cafeteria after school, a few more days later

RUPERT, CLIFF, TIANA, VIRGINIA, JACK, ALICE

SCENE 6: Rupert's back yard, a few days later

RUPERT, CLIFF, TIANA, VIRGINIA, ALICE, JACK

SCENE 7: Rupert's back yard, a few more days later

RUPERT, CLIFF, TIANA, VIRGINIA, ALICE, JACK

SCENE 8: Back to the film contest from scene 1

RUPERT, LUCAS, MATILDA, WEBBER, PATTINSON, 3 JUDGES,
CLIFF

PLAY PROPERTIES

4 Clipboards with Pens – 3 For

Judges, 1 For Rupert

Lunch Tray

8 oz. Milk Carton

Napkin

Bookbag – Rupert

Bookbag – Cliff

Bookbag – Virginia

Bookbag – Tiana

Lunch Bag – Cliff

Dollar – Rupert

Giraffe Puppet

Manga – Tiana

6 "Screenplays"

Digital Video Camera

Video Camera Bag

Tripod

Sandwich – Cliff

Prize Ribbons (Red and Blue) –

Judge #2

MOVIE PROPERTIES – MASTER LIST

Alarm Clock
Giraffe Puppet
Ketchup
White Poster Board
Cheap Pen
Ketchup Packets
Toy Gun

Bread Knife
Scissors
Action Figure with Green or
Camouflage Legs
Paper or Plastic Bag
Sock Puppet

PLAY COSTUMES

RUPERT NEWELL – teenage male. Black pants with tennis shoes. In the film contest scenes he wears a dress shirt and tie. In the rest of the play, he wears a flannel shirt.

JOSHUA / JENNIFER LUCAS, MATILDA WILLIAMS and DORA/DAVID WEBBER – teenagers attempting to look nice for the film contest. Dress clothes.

MARGERY / MARTIN PATTINSON – She is in her 50's and wears a pristine but outdated and ugly dress (or suit, if male), and too much makeup.

JUDGES – Professional-looking suits or dresses.

CLIFF SPALL – teenage female. Her clothing should be eccentric but not overly freakish. The actress in the original production wore a red, green, and yellow tie-dyed shirt with a swirl pattern; a black pinstriped jacket; black and white checkered pants; and black and white tennis shoes.

VIRGINIA PHELPS – teenage female. Jeans, tennis shoes, and a shirt emblazoned with a large “V” or the word “Vegan” (or both) or some sort of animal rights logo or slogan.

JACK FELTON – teenage male. Jeans, tennis shoes, and a shirt or sweatshirt with a sports team logo. For his leprechaun costume, he wears a combination of bright green and camouflage and, if possible, a cheap green plastic St. Patrick's Day bowler hat.

TIANA BUCKLE – teenage female. Wears an approximation of a Japanese school girl uniform—white blouse with a blue or red scarf

or tie around her neck; knee-length black, blue or plaid skirt (shorts underneath recommended); white socks, and black shoes.

ALICE MASON – male (named for rocker Alice Cooper) in his late teens or early 20's. Jeans, white t-shirt, denim jacket, cowboy boots, cowboy hat. For his leprechaun costume, he wears a combination of bright green and camouflage and, if possible, a cheap green plastic St. Patrick's Day bowler hat.

MOVIE COSTUMES

DAVID (RUPERT) – For the opening scene, pajamas or pajama bottoms with an undershirt.

For the scene in Bob's office, he should wear a dress shirt and tie.

For other scenes, he may wear clothing similar to or the same as what he wears in the play.

CATHERINE (TIANA) – pajamas.

SALLY (CLIFF) – suit or other dress clothes.

BOB (JACK) – dress shirt and tie.

MAX (JACK) – JACK's costume from the play.

CHRIS (ALICE) – ALICE's costume from the play.

DETECTIVE PORTMAN (ALICE) – Alice's costume from the play and an overcoat or trench coat.

DETECTIVE JONES (VIRGINIA) – Virginia's costume from the play, plus an overcoat or trench coat.

LEPRECHAUNS (ALICE and JACK) – the same as described in their costumes for the play.

GREAT SPIRITUAL OLD GUY (TIANA) – Santa Claus beard, cheesy-looking oriental hat, bed sheet, pink fingernails and toenails.

LIBRARY PATRONS – Contemporary teenage clothing.

NINJAS – full-body black clothing with hoods, black masks covering the entire face except the eyes.

MOVIE LOCATIONS

Bedroom (David's bedroom)
RUPERT, TIANA, CLIFF

Bathroom with commode (David's bathroom)
RUPERT

Office or cubicle with desk (Bob's office)
RUPERT, CLIFF, JACK, ALICE, VIRGINIA

Back exterior of a house (David's back yard)
RUPERT, JACK, ALICE, CLIFF

Another office with two desks and two chairs (Jones and Portman's office)
RUPERT, ALICE, VIRGINIA

Living room (David's living room)
RUPERT, CLIFF

School library (Lucas' film clip that starts the play should also be filmed here)
RUPERT, CLIFF, TIANA, 3 JUDGES, (WEBBER, LUCAS, MATILDA optional)

Images of a parked police car, the outside of a house, and the outside of a shack or shed are also needed—photos will be fine.

NOTE: If necessary, offices can double for one another.

AUTHOR NOTES

In the spring of 2006, I staged a full-length play called The Bloody Attack of the Evil, Demonic Giraffe Puppet at the school where I work. My wife and many of my former students consider it to be my magnum opus. It's certainly been one of my most popular plays since it was published, and I've gotten very positive, enthusiastic feedback from students who have been involved in productions of the show. But I know that not every school has a full-length non-musical on its production schedule, and I wanted to offer the comedic madness that is this play to a wider audience. I'd been thinking about a one-act version for probably a couple of years, and this winter, I finally did it. Boiling it down from two hours to 40 minutes was tough. I had to take out some stuff I really liked, and some characters I was very fond of. But I think the end result is a strong, concentrated, espresso-like dose of what people love about the original. And I even managed to hold onto the movie within the play.

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THE BLOODY ATTACK OF THE EVIL, DEMONIC GIRAFFE PUPPET

by
Bradley Walton

SCENE 1: THE FILM CONTEST

AT RISE: *In the center of the apron, a large screen hangs or stands. There is a diagonal row of four chairs DR and a diagonal row of four chairs DL. The chair closest to the screen in the DL group sits slightly apart from the other three.*

RUPERT NEWELL, JOSHUA LUCAS, MATILDA WILLIAMS and DORA WEBBER occupy the DR chairs. THEY are all high school students. THEY are all wearing dress clothes. RUPERT is wearing black pants and black tennis shoes that HE will wear throughout the rest of the play, along with a dress shirt and tie that HE will change out of as soon as the scene is over.

DL, MARGERY PATTINSON sits in the chair closest to the screen. SHE is in her 50's, wearing a pristine but outdated and ugly dress (or suit, if male), and too much makeup.

In the other DL chairs are JUDGES 1, 2, and 3, clipboards in hand and taking notes. THEY are all dressed professionally. EVERYONE is looking at the screen. The play opens with the final moments of a movie in which LUCAS is standing in front of a bookshelf in a library.

LUCAS: (on film) . . . culminating in a magnificent society of hope, peace and love, as we march boldly into the days and years to come, thereby creating a brighter future . . . for the children of tomorrow.

(The image dissolves into a serene landscape or seascape as the words "The End" appear on the screen and soaring music plays on the soundtrack. The music fades and the image fades to black as the film ends. The stage lights come up. LUCAS is smiling proudly. RUPERT, MATILDA, and WEBBER look nervous. The JUDGES scribble furiously on their clipboards. MARGERY PATTINSON stands, walks to the center of the stage, and address the audience.)

PATTINSON: And that was *The Children of Tomorrow*, a film by Joshua Lucas. Lovely, Joshua. Thank you. Our last entry in the Triangle Service Club's "A Better World" student documentary film contest comes from Rupert Newell, also of Cooper High School. It is my great pleasure to present *Materialism and the Decay of Morality in Postmodern Society*.

RUPERT: Um . . . excuse me, Ms. Pattinson?

PATTINSON: (*annoyed*) Yes, Rupert?

RUPERT: Um . . . the title of the film got changed. I uh, didn't get a chance to tell you. Sorry.

PATTINSON: It changed?

RUPERT: It still deals with the same subject . . . just under a different title.

PATTINSON: (*obviously disapproving*) Well . . . in that case, I present Rupert Newell's documentary *about* materialism and the decay of morality in postmodern society . . . whatever its new title may be.

(*The lights go down. RUPERT and PATTINSON sit. THE BLOODY ATTACK OF THE EVIL, DEMONIC GIRAFFE PUPPET: THE LEPRECHAUNS STRIKE BACK begins playing. When the title appears on the screen, we hear PATTINSON exclaim . . .*)

PATTINSON: Oh, my Lord!

(*As the film plays, RUPERT squirms uncomfortably in his seat. EVERYONE else on stage watches with a mixture of horror and fascination. The movie plays until the subtitle, "How did this happen? What have I wrought?" appears on the screen. The film stops. BLACKOUT.*)

SCENE 2: THE SCHOOL CAFETERIA, ABOUT TWO WEEKS EARLIER

RUPERT sitting at a cafeteria table. There are six chairs. RUPERT is now wearing a long-sleeved flannel shirt. HE has a bookbag, a lunch tray and milk carton, and is wiping his mouth with a napkin. CLIFF enters. SHE is a high school student dressed in eccentric but not overly freakish clothing. SHE is carrying a bookbag and a brown paper lunch bag.

RUPERT and CLIFF have been friends for years. Their friendship has grown into mutual romantic attraction which neither of them has openly acknowledged. THEY are physically affectionate—CLIFF especially—but in a friendly, sometimes joking manner.

CLIFF: *(throwing her arms around RUPERT's neck from behind in a slightly obnoxious hug)* Rupert!

RUPERT: Hey, Cliff. Guess what?

CLIFF: Did your parents buy you that video camera for your birthday?

RUPERT: *(grinning)* Yup.

CLIFF: Cool! Let's make a slasher movie!

RUPERT: Cliff, the video camera isn't some toy. It's media. Media has power. With power comes responsibility.

CLIFF: Rupert. You are not Spider-Man's Uncle Ben.

(VIRGINIA enters. SHE is wearing jeans, tennis shoes, and a t-shirt emblazoned with a large "V" or the word "Vegan" (or both) or some sort of animal rights slogan. SHE carries a bookbag.)

VIRGINIA: What are you eating, today?

CLIFF: Live puppies.

VIRGINIA: You're disgusting, Cliff. *(exits)*

CLIFF: *(calling after her)* You're a vegan, Virginia!

RUPERT: Given that she really is a vegan, I don't think she considers that an insult.

(JACK enters. HE is dressed in jeans, tennis shoes, and a shirt or sweatshirt with a sports team logo. HE would not dream of owning a bookbag.)

JACK: Hey, look. It's the geek twins.

RUPERT: *(despondently)* Hi, Jack.

JACK: Gimme a dollar or I'll give you a wedgie.

CLIFF: Why?

JACK: 'Cause I need a dollar.

CLIFF: You need an attitude adjustment.

JACK: Watch how you talk to me. Show a little respect.

CLIFF: We have no respect for you, Jack. Everybody knows the school fudges your grades and your disciplinary record to keep mister star player on the football team, but you're still just somebody who runs around with a *ball*, and my neighbor's dog can do that!

(BLACKOUT.)

**SCENE 3 – WALKING HOME FROM SCHOOL
THROUGH THE WOODS, THAT AFTERNOON**

RUPERT and CLIFF enter. THEY slowly make their way across the stage as the scene progresses. BOTH are carrying their bookbags. The giraffe puppet is lying on the ground on the opposite side of the stage from where THEY enter.

CLIFF: I can't believe Jack didn't get suspended!

RUPERT: Well, he didn't technically punch anybody.

CLIFF: He would have if that teacher hadn't stopped him.

RUPERT: You kind of set him off.

CLIFF: You're too passive.

RUPERT: I try not to make waves.

CLIFF: You talk all the time about how you want social justice, but you don't want to make waves?

RUPERT: Can we please not go through the woods today? The sidewalk is more . . . paved.

CLIFF: Cutting through the woods takes half the time. Come on.

RUPERT: All right.

CLIFF: Listen, you want to make the world better? You need to show a little backbone.

RUPERT: Funny you should mention that. I got a flyer in the library this afternoon about a student film contest sponsored by the Triangle Service Club, and that's the theme.

CLIFF: What? Backbone?

RUPERT: No. A better world. I want to make a film about how we're all in bondage to materialism.

CLIFF: Sounds boring.

RUPERT: *(stops, looking at the giraffe puppet on the stage)* What is that?

CLIFF: Looks like a dead animal. Lick it and see.

RUPERT: I'm not going to lick it. You lick it.

CLIFF: It'd be a lot more fun to watch you do it.

RUPERT: *(kneeling)* It's like—a puppet of a giraffe. A really ugly one. It looks like it could be an axe murderer.

CLIFF: Now there's an idea for a movie—an axe-murdering puppet! You could call it *The Bloody Attack of the Evil, Demonic Giraffe Puppet*.

RUPERT: I don't think we could tie that into the theme, "A Better World."

CLIFF: Sure you can. The puppet gets vanquished and the world is better off without it.

RUPERT: No.

CLIFF: Okay—how about this—the person who owns the puppet can't bring himself to get rid of it even though it's murdering people. He's like, addicted to the puppet. And the puppet symbolizes materialism.

RUPERT: You're really stretching it.

CLIFF: Then just put the ugly thing down and let's go.

RUPERT: I picked it up. If I put it down now, it's littering.

CLIFF: You're going to take it home to throw it away?

RUPERT: It's not like it's heavy.

(BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 4: THE CAFETERIA AFTER SCHOOL,
A FEW DAYS LATER

RUPERT and CLIFF are standing behind the table from scene 2. Their bookbags are on the table.

CLIFF: You think anyone will show up?

RUPERT: We put up signs all over school advertising that we wanted people to be in the movie. I guess we'll see.

(TIANA enters. SHE is wearing an approximation of a Japanese school girl uniform—white blouse with a blue or red scarf or tie around her neck; knee-length black, blue or plaid skirt (shorts underneath recommended); white socks, and black shoes. SHE carries a bookbag.)

TIANA: Is this the movie meeting?

RUPERT: Yeah. Hi.

TIANA: I'm Tiana Buckle. *(sits on table)*

CLIFF: What do you do?

TIANA: I read manga.

RUPERT: Japanese comics in English?

TIANA: Yup!

CLIFF: Do you do anything besides read manga?

TIANA: Um . . .

(VIRGINIA enters, carrying her bookbag.)

CLIFF: Hi, Virginia. Go away.

VIRGINIA: I thought you wanted people to be in the movie.

RUPERT: You want to be in the movie?

VIRGINIA: My mom says I should hang out with people who eat meat so I can broaden my horizons. So, I guess I'll try this. As long as nobody in the movie abuses animals.

TIANA: You don't eat meat?

VIRGINIA: Or animal products.

TIANA: (*completely serious*) You mean like poop?

VIRGINIA: (*also completely serious*) No, like milk and eggs and stuff.

TIANA: Wow. That must be really hard.

VIRGINIA: Not really. (*sits*) I know that I'm a better person than you. Plus, I'm a lot healthier and I'll live longer.

(*JACK enters.*)

RUPERT: Oh, no.

CLIFF: What do you want, Jack?

JACK: What I want is to beat the snot out of you, but my guidance counselor told me I had to make peace with you and help with your stupid movie. I think it's his idea of creative punishment.

RUPERT: But this film is a non-school-related activity. We shouldn't have to take you if we don't want you!

JACK: I've got a huge back log of disciplinary referrals, and as of last Saturday, football season is over. I'm out of leverage. I can't afford to not be in this film.

RUPERT: Are you begging?

JACK: No. I'm threatening.

CLIFF: But you just said that you were out of leverage.

JACK: Not if I wait until next football season. (*sits*)

RUPERT: Cliff, come over here for a minute.

(*RUPERT and CLIFF move a few steps away.*)

We can make this work to our advantage. If he's part of the film, he has to do what I tell him.

CLIFF: Like what?

RUPERT: Something embarrassing. And we can film it to use as blackmail material for next year.

CLIFF: That's vicious. I'm proud of you.

RUPERT: Thanks. You think anyone else is coming? I was hoping for more people.

CLIFF: My cousin Alice was an extra in a movie that filmed near here. Might be willing to help us out.

RUPERT: That'd be great! See what you can do. (*Addresses the group, pulling a clipboard out of his bookbag. The giraffe puppet falls out.*) Okay. Thanks for coming.

JACK: Why do you have a giraffe puppet in your backpack?

RUPERT: I forgot to throw it away.

JACK: Riiight. Freak.

TIANA: What's the movie called?

RUPERT: *Materialism and the Decay of Morality in Postmodern Society.*

JACK: Boring.

VIRGINIA: You know, I think maybe it's time for my mom to pick me up.
(stands)

TIANA: I think maybe I need to go to the dentist. (stands)

JACK: Are we done? Great! (stands)

RUPERT: Well, we don't have to do it as a straight—I mean, we can use something to, um, you know, symbolize stuff and—

CLIFF: Another name that we have on the table is *The Bloody Attack of the Evil, Demonic Giraffe Puppet.*

RUPERT: (stage whisper) What are you doing?

CLIFF: (stage whisper) Saving your movie.

RUPERT: (stage whisper) This is not what I want!

CLIFF: (stage whisper) Then stop me. (to the GROUP) Everything in the movie is symbolic, but basically it'll be a slasher film. Just leave the subtext to Rupert.

TIANA: That sounds kind of cool.

JACK: Please, kill me now.

VIRGINIA: Are the puppet's victims people or animals?

CLIFF: People.

VIRGINIA: Do people count as meat?

CLIFF: Yeah.

VIRGINIA: Does the puppet eat people?

CLIFF: No.

VIRGINIA: Okay, good. Because vegans aren't into that, and I couldn't be in the movie if it did.

CLIFF: Right.

VIRGINIA: It doesn't drink people's blood, does it?

JACK: No! It's a puppet!

VIRGINIA: Good. Vegans don't do that either.

CLIFF: It just mauls people to death.

VIRGINIA: But nobody gets eaten—just killed?

CLIFF: Every single character is a vegan. Including the puppet.

VIRGINIA: All right! I'm in.

TIANA: Me, too.

JACK: I'm not here. This isn't happening to me.

CLIFF: Great. We'll meet back here on Monday after Rupert's finished the screenplay. Thanks for coming!

(TIANA and VIRGINIA exit.)

RUPERT: I hate you.

CLIFF: You didn't stop me.

RUPERT: I already submitted the entry form with my title on it!

JACK: *(crosses to RUPERT)* The Bloody Attack of the Evil, Demonic Giraffe Puppet? I never realized just how desperate a loser you were.

RUPERT: Me neither.

SCENE 5: THE CAFETERIA AFTER SCHOOL,
A FEW MORE DAYS LATER

RUPERT is handing out scripts to CLIFF, VIRGINIA, JACK, and TIANA.

RUPERT: Here you go.

TIANA: Thanks.

(TIANA lays her script down, pulls a manga out of her bookbag, and starts reading. ALICE enters. HE is in his late teens or early 20's. HE is dressed in jeans, a white t-shirt, denim jacket, cowboy boots, and a cowboy hat.)

CLIFF: Alice, thanks for coming!

ALICE: Sure.

CLIFF: Everybody, I'd like to introduce my cousin, Alice.

(There is a long pause as EVERYONE looks at ALICE, trying to make sense of CLIFF's statement. RUPERT appears particularly alarmed.)

He was named after Alice Cooper, the rock and roll guy.

GROUP: Oh, okay. Hey, Alice. Nice to meet you. Etc.

CLIFF: Alice, this is Rupert, Virginia, Tiana, and Jack.

ALICE: Hey.

CLIFF: Rupert, why don't you give Alice a script?

RUPERT: What? Um . . . oh. Sure. Here. *(Hands ALICE a script.)* Um . . . it's not completely finalized just yet.

ALICE: No biggie. Movies usually get rewritten during filming. It's why most of 'em suck.

RUPERT: Cliff, can I talk to you for a second?

(RUPERT pulls CLIFF aside.)

You didn't tell me Alice was a guy!

CLIFF: I'd have thought that knowing a girl named Cliff for fourteen years would teach you not to make those sorts of assumptions.

RUPERT: What kind of parent names their son Alice?

CLIFF: What kind of parent names their daughter Cliff? All your life you've known me, and you've never asked me that question!

RUPERT: I met you when I was like, two. I've just taken your name for granted. Listen, the character I wrote for Alice to play—

CLIFF: Alice is playing Chris, right?

RUPERT: Short for Christina! It's a girl!

CLIFF: Chris is also a guy's name.

RUPERT: But Chris has a love scene with Jack's character!

CLIFF: What? Why?

RUPERT: I was hoping Alice would be a hottie and that maybe Jack would give in to his baser instincts and I could get video of him in his underwear.

CLIFF: Were you going to make smut?

RUPERT: For blackmail material!

CLIFF: You were going to make smut.

RUPERT: I'm a guy with a video camera and an opportunity! What'd you expect me to do?

CLIFF: You're scum.

RUPERT: I'm sorry. Hit me if it'll make you feel better.

CLIFF: I don't want to scum up my hand. Your karma's gonna bite you in the seat of the pants for this.

(ALICE crosses to RUPERT and CLIFF.)

ALICE: Listen, I got a problem with your script. It says they find the puppet in the woods. That's a total cliché. Be original. Have them find the puppet someplace else. Someplace that radiates pure evil.

RUPERT: Like where?

ALICE: Floating in the toilet.

RUPERT: How do you equate toilets with evil?

ALICE: If you don't know, then your family's not eating enough broccoli.

RUPERT: But—

ALICE: Use the toilet. It'll be awesome. Trust me.

TIANA: *(looking up from her manga)* Hey Rupert, can I play a ninja in the movie?

RUPERT: Tiana, your character is a librarian.

TIANA: *(still holding her manga, TIANA crosses to RUPERT, making karate chops in the air)* Could you make me a martial arts librarian? I could have ninjas to guard the library! They're really quiet and they'd be perfect for library security!

RUPERT: Uh . . .

TIANA: And could you set the movie in Japan? Because that's where manga comes from (*thrusts her manga into RUPERT's face*) and manga is really cool.

VIRGINIA: Are the Japanese all vegans?

TIANA: I know they eat a lot of rice and soy sauce.

VIRGINIA: But aren't they also Bootyists (*shooting for "Buddhists" and missing*) or something? They're like idol-worshipping heatherns (*sic*), aren't they?

TIANA: They eat a *lot* of soy sauce.

VIRGINIA: Okay, yeah. Let's set the movie in Tokyo.

RUPERT: But—

VIRGINIA: Can you name anyplace else in the world with the moral purity of Japan, even if they are a bunch of idol-worshipping heatherns?

RUPERT: What—no—I—

JACK: (*seeing an opportunity to make RUPERT's life difficult*) I ate some sushi once. It had imitation crab meat in it.

VIRGINIA: (*pointing at JACK*) See? Most people would just kill the poor sweet little crabs and eat them, but the Japanese make imitation meat to put in their seussy! So we're going to set the movie in Tokyo, or you're not going to have a cast. (*sits*)

RUPERT: Jack, tell Virginia that's not what you—

TIANA: I never realized imitation crab meat wasn't real meat.

RUPERT: It isn't—

ALICE: Of course it is. Why else would the packaging say "imitation"? They'd get sued if they lied about stuff like that.

(*JACK snorts and laughs.*)

What?

JACK: (*gleefully sarcastic*) I can't believe that Rupert didn't know imitation crab meat wasn't real meat.

TIANA: Yeah, Rupert. You can be pretty stupid.

RUPERT: Cliff—I—they—

CLIFF: I think you should resolve this on your own. You're the director.

RUPERT: But—Japan—imitation—no—fish—
(*RUPERT looks at everyone staring back at him.*)

Okay! We'll go with Japan!

TIANA: Can all the dialogue be in Japanese?

RUPERT: No!

TIANA: Why not?

RUPERT: We don't speak Japanese.

TIANA: Can't you make up something that sounds like Japanese?

RUPERT: Tiana, I'm sorry, but I don't think that this is a good idea.

TIANA: (*crumbles to floor and starts to cry*) Please! I really, really want to!

RUPERT: No. Please.

(*TIANA sobs loudly.*)

All right! The movie'll be in fake Japanese with English subtitles!

TIANA: (*instantly springing back to her feet*) Yay! Oh—instead of nonsense words, you could use the names of manga artists so the words sound Japanese.

RUPERT: Huh?

TIANA: Like, have somebody say, "Katsuhiro Otomo Goseki Kojima."

VIRGINIA: What's Katsu—whatever really mean?

TIANA: They're the creators of the manga series *Akira* and *Lone Wolf and Cub*.

CLIFF: So it'd be like the reverse of having someone say, "Tom Cruise Oprah Winfrey Brad Pitt" with a subtitle in Japanese that says "Your right tooth is an electric chimpanzee"?

TIANA: Yeah!

VIRGINIA: And every character in the movie is a vegan?

RUPERT: (*takes a deep breath*) Everybody's a vegan.

ALICE: (*looking at the script*) Rupert, what character am I?

RUPERT: You're playing Chris.

ALICE: Who's playing Max?

RUPERT: Jack.

ALICE: Whoa. Whoa. It says here that Chris and Max are kissing.

JACK: No way! If you expect me to—

ALICE: If you expect *me* to—

RUPERT: No! That's changed! Sorry. No kissing. It'll be a handshake. They're just friends. Honest.

JACK: You better not embarrass me.

RUPERT: (*innocently*) Embarrass you? Never.

ALICE: Gotta wonder about you sometimes, Rupert. And this script. I keep looking at it and I can't shake the feeling that it's missing something.

RUPERT: Like what? No. Never mind. Ignore that question.

ALICE: I got it! You know the song "What's the Frequency, Kenneth?" by R.E.M.?

RUPERT: Vaguely.

ALICE: There's this one line in it that I always thought would be a great element to use in a movie: "You wore a shirt of violent green."

RUPERT: What does that even mean?

ALICE: Think. Who would wear a shirt of violent green?

RUPERT: The Incredible Hulk?

ALICE: No! Don't be stupid! Military leprechauns!

(BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 6: RUPERT'S BACK YARD,
A FEW DAYS LATER

RUPERT is holding a video camera mounted on a tripod above his head. CLIFF is standing by, ready to catch the video camera if RUPERT drops it. VIRGINIA is standing nearby watching. TIANA is reading a manga. CLIFF's lunch bag, RUPERT'S backpack and camera bag, and VIRGINIA's backpack are nearby.

RUPERT: Alice? Jack? Are you ready?

ALICE: (from offstage) Ready!

JACK: (from offstage) I'm gonna kill you next fall, Rupert!

(JACK and ALICE skip onstage. THEY are dressed in leprechaun costumes consisting of bright green, camouflage, and if possible, plastic green bowler hats.)

JACK and ALICE: (singing to the tune of "Good King Wenceslas")

Katsuhiko Rumiko Kanada Yoshida!

RUPERT: Cut!

(RUPERT lowers the video camera.)

JACK: Next fall, Rupert—I swear, I am going to make you pay for this!

RUPERT: Jack, I just shot footage of you dressed like a leprechaun, dancing, and singing a happy song in complete gibberish. It *will* be in the movie, but I promise that the words I put in your mouth through the magic of subtitles won't be about you. Now, if you tick me off enough, I could make a different set of subtitles and have you singing about your personal hygiene or anything else that comes to mind. And then I can post it on the Internet for the whole world to see. So back off.

JACK: You do that and I'll—

RUPERT: I know you will. And I have three words for you: Mutually assured destruction. You don't hurt me, and I won't hurt you.

(JACK storms offstage.)

ALICE: (*crossing to RUPERT*) Dude needs to lighten up. You add the CGI blood in there and it's going to be awesome.

RUPERT: CGI blood? Um. Yeah. Right.

ALICE: So, is that it for today?

RUPERT: (*happy to have the subject changed*) Yeah! See you tomorrow!

TIANA: Okay! Bye!

VIRGINIA: See ya.

(*RUPERT puts the video camera in his camera bag, then sits on the edge of the stage with his clipboard. CLIFF gets her lunch bag and joins him. ALICE and VIRGINIA exit.*)

TIANA: Digital blood seems like a lot of work. How come you haven't used some kind of red stuff splattering for that?

RUPERT: Uh, I want to keep things clean on-set.

CLIFF: Cleanliness is next to wussiness.

TIANA: Huh?

CLIFF: (*realizing SHE shouldn't undermine RUPERT's tenuous authority and saying the first thing that pops into her head*) Rupert gives me warm fuzzies.

TIANA: Oh. So you two are dating?

(*RUPERT and CLIFF look at each other in surprised, uncomfortable silence, then turn away from each other as THEY break out in forced laughter. As the laughter fades, THEY look at each other again, then turn their heads away as THEY force out a few more faint chuckles.*)

RUPERT: The thought never even occurred to me.

CLIFF: (*unconvincingly*) Me neither.

TIANA: Oh. Okay. I couldn't tell for sure.

RUPERT: You couldn't?

CLIFF: Ah. Right. Well . . . see you tomorrow.

TIANA: Bye.

(*TIANA exits. CLIFF and RUPERT look at each other, then quickly break eye contact again. CLIFF pulls a sandwich out of her lunch bag and starts eating. RUPERT starts writing on his clipboard.*)

CLIFF: Digital blood?

RUPERT: I didn't even think about us needing blood to use in this thing.

CLIFF: It's kind of in the title.

RUPERT: Don't. Please.

CLIFF: You could always insert some shots of ketchup splattering on a wall.

(VIRGINIA enters.)

VIRGINIA: I forgot my bag.

(CLIFF attempts to conceal her sandwich from VIRGINIA's view.)

Whatcha got?

CLIFF: If you don't ask, I won't tell, and we can both spare ourselves some grief.

VIRGINIA: You're eating slices of some poor animal aren't you?

CLIFF: It's dead. It's okay.

VIRGINIA: No, it's not. We should respect all life.

CLIFF: (*stands*) But if you respect all life, then you can't eat plants, either.

VIRGINIA: Those don't count.

CLIFF: Why?

VIRGINIA: I don't know. They just don't.

CLIFF: What about all the defenseless bacteria on the plants?

VIRGINIA: But they're not fishy or cute and furry.

CLIFF: Snakes aren't cute and furry.

VIRGINIA: You can't walk into a fast food chain and order a snakeburger.

CLIFF: How do you know what's *really* in a fast food burger patty?

VIRGINIA: It's hamburger. It's made out of ham.

CLIFF: It's made out of cow!

VIRGINIA: That's what I said.

CLIFF: You said ham!

VIRGINIA: Cows aren't ham?

CLIFF: Cows are beef!

VIRGINIA: But can't cows be ham, too?

CLIFF: Pigs are ham!

VIRGINIA: Then why don't they call ham pig?

CLIFF: For the same reason they don't call beef cow!

VIRGINIA: Why don't they call beef cow?

CLIFF: I have no freaking idea!

VIRGINIA: Why do they call hamburgers hamburgers if they're not made out of ham?

CLIFF: For the same reason they don't call ham pig.

VIRGINIA: You still shouldn't eat that sandwich.

CLIFF: Why?

VIRGINIA: Because you'll probably go to the bad place when you die.
See you tomorrow.

(VIRGINIA exits. CLIFF sits, stunned.)

RUPERT: I'm sure she means well.

CLIFF: She just told me I'm going to the bad place. People don't mean well when they tell you that. That girl's got issues. One of these days, her world view is going to implode, and I hope I'm there to see it when it does.

RUPERT: As long as it's after the movie is done. *(Beat.)* I hope those guys don't come up with any more ideas. I don't know what I'll do.

CLIFF: You could always say no.

RUPERT: I tried that. It didn't work.

CLIFF: You didn't have any trouble shooting down my request to make a slasher film.

RUPERT: And yet we somehow wound up making one. Sort of. And anyway, you're my friend. I can say no to you.

CLIFF: You can refuse your friends, but you cave in to everyone else? Are you so desperate for validation that you need the approval of people that you don't even like?

RUPERT: What?

CLIFF: *(in a slightly mocking, sing-songy voice)* You're not existentially fulfilled.

RUPERT: How so?

CLIFF: You have so little faith in yourself that you rely on the faith of others—on something outside of you—to give you confidence, and it makes you do stupid things.

RUPERT: You're going along with those stupid things.

CLIFF: It's your movie.

RUPERT: *(reacting to what's on his clipboard)* What the—

CLIFF: What?

RUPERT: I'm filling out the entry form again.

CLIFF: Why?

RUPERT: Because somebody changed my title. It says here that the movie is supposed to be a documentary.

CLIFF: You filled it out once already and you didn't notice this?

RUPERT: I was excited. I didn't actually read every single word.

CLIFF: "Documentary" is a pretty significant word.

RUPERT: I can't call this a documentary.

CLIFF: Sure you can. The movie is about a guy who finds a puppet and his life goes in a complete downward spiral. You found a puppet and now your life is in a complete downward spiral.

RUPERT: That's kind of a stretch.

CLIFF: By the way, I've been thinking about your whole "materialism is bad" idea.

RUPERT: Which is the basis for all the symbolism in the movie.

CLIFF: Right. The group that's sponsoring this contest—the Triangle Club—they're financed by donations, right?

RUPERT: Yeah.

CLIFF: And people need to have money in order to make donations.

RUPERT: Yeah.

CLIFF: And the economy needs to be strong in order for people to have money.

RUPERT: Yeah?

CLIFF: So if people suddenly stopped being materialistic and quit buying frivolous junk they don't need, it would kill the economy and the Triangle Club wouldn't get any donations. They probably wouldn't like that that.

RUPERT: Thank you so much for completely annihilating the whole point of my movie.

CLIFF: Better to hear it from me than the judges. At least now you've got time to figure something out.

(TIANA enters.)

TIANA: Hey, Rupert?

RUPERT: Tiana. What's up?

TIANA: Translating the script into Japanese names is turning out to be a lot harder than I thought. Is it okay if I don't want to do it anymore?

RUPERT: *(stands)* But we've already filmed all the leprechauns talking in fake Japanese, along with the entire first scene of the movie!

TIANA: *(starting to cry)* But it's all running together in my head and now I'm starting to confuse the names from my manga and it's making me confused and I don't want to do it anymore, okay?

(RUPERT looks at CLIFF.)

CLIFF: Your movie.

TIANA: I even tried using Japanese words like "sushi" and the names of cars, but it didn't help.

RUPERT: Tiana, you committed to this—

TIANA: But I'm committed to my manga, too. I love them, but I feel like I'm abusing them and now they won't love me back.

RUPERT: Tiana, they *don't* love you back.

TIANA: Nooooo!

RUPERT: Tiana! Please! We don't need this! Tiana! I can't afford for you to have a nervous breakdown!

TIANA: *(crumbles to ground)* Waaaahhhhhh!

RUPERT: All right! I lied! They love you! *(kneeling beside TIANA)*

Every molecule of paper on every single page has a little heart inside of it that beats with love for you! Now for the love of heaven—*(holds up her manga)* for the love of manga—pull yourself together.

TIANA: For the love of manga—for the love of manga, I can do it.

RUPERT: Thank you.

TIANA: Why did you tell me that mean lie?

RUPERT: I thought you needed to be more self-reliant.

TIANA: I don't need to be self-reliant. I have manga.

RUPERT: I know. I realize that, now. I'm sorry.

TIANA: I don't have to keep translating the movie, do I?

RUPERT: (*sighs deeply*) No. You don't have to keep translating the movie.

TIANA: Yay!

(*TIANA skips off happily. RUPERT looks helplessly at CLIFF. BLACKOUT.*)

SCENE 7: RUPERT'S BACK YARD,
A FEW MORE DAYS LATER

RUPERT's video camera is set up on its tripod. ALICE and JACK, dressed in their regular clothes, are standing to one side. CLIFF, TIANA, VIRGINIA, and RUPERT are standing to the other. TIANA is holding the giraffe puppet.

ALICE: This used to be the scene where they kiss, isn't it?

RUPERT: Yeah. But we changed that. They're shaking hands. That's all.

JACK: They're *just* friends, right?

RUPERT: Yes! Now shake hands!

(*TIANA crouches down between ALICE and JACK. RUPERT begins filming.*)

ALICE: So, hey, you uh . . . you wanna shake hands?

JACK: Shake hands?

ALICE: Yeah, man.

JACK: You mean like, shake hands—shake hands?

ALICE: Yeah. Like that.

JACK: Sure, dude.

ALICE: Nothing wrong with a little brotherly handshake, right?

JACK: No, no. Not at all. Nothing wrong with that.

ALICE: Right. (*reluctantly extends hand*)

JACK: Hey, man. Looks like you got a scratch there.

ALICE: What? Hey, yeah. You're right. Little scratch.

JACK: Maybe we oughta not shake hands, you know. Might get infected.

ALICE: Yeah, might. Might get infected and maybe kill me or something.

JACK: Wouldn't want that.

ALICE: No. Wouldn't be able to shake hands after that.

RUPERT: *(yells)* Will you get on with it!?

ALICE: But uh, I really wanna shake hands. Let's live like crazy people.

JACK: Okay. Here. Shake my hand.

(THEY shake. TIANA thrusts the puppet up between them on the last line and pretends to maul them. JACK and ALICE scream and stagger apart. JACK's scream is much less enthusiastic than ALICE's.)

RUPERT: What's wrong with you guys?

ALICE: Dude, chill out.

RUPERT: I don't have time to chill out. We're on a deadline!

VIRGINIA: Don't you think that they should've said something about what good vegans they were before the puppet killed them?

RUPERT: Every character in the movie is a vegan. I think the audience will get the idea.

JACK: Except for my character, Max. He drinks milk.

(RUPERT shoots an alarmed look at JACK.)

VIRGINIA: If Max drinks milk, I can't be in the movie. You have to edit me out. I don't want to go to the bad place when I die!

CLIFF: What kind of freaky religion are you?

VIRGINIA: I'm Catholic.

CLIFF: Catholics aren't vegans.

VIRGINIA: Well, I'm a Catholic *and* a vegan. My food doesn't have anything to do with my religion.

RUPERT: You could've fooled me.

CLIFF: Wait a minute. Do Catholic vegans take Communion?

VIRGINIA: Sure we do.

CLIFF: But that doesn't make sense. Catholics believe in transubstantiation—that the Communion bread and wine literally become the flesh and blood of Christ, even though they still look and taste like bread and wine.

(VIRGINIA gasps.)

JACK: That doesn't sound very vegan to me.

VIRGINIA: But I'm a good Catholic!

CLIFF: You're a bad vegan.

RUPERT: (*trying to salvage the situation*) You're a good Catholic!

VIRGINIA: If I don't take Communion, I'll go to the bad place! But if I eat flesh and drink blood, I'll go to the bad place. (*pauses as it fully sinks in*) I'm gonna go to the bad place!

RUPERT: Virginia, think—

VIRGINIA: But it's hard!

RUPERT: *Try* to think. There's no possible way that you taking Communion could be a sin!

VIRGINIA: But I'm a vegan!

CLIFF: Sucks to be you!

VIRGINIA: You have to take me out of the movie! It promotes the exploration (*meaning "exploitation" but using the wrong word*) of animals!

JACK: But you eat flesh!

VIRGINIA: Even though I'm a sinner I have to *try* not to sin, so you've got to take me out of the movie!

RUPERT: Virginia, I'm sure that transubstantiation has got to count as some kind of exception to the vegan meat rule! Go ask your priest or find a Catholic vegan support group online or something. But pull yourself together!

VIRGINIA: You have to edit me out.

RUPERT: Jack's character doesn't drink milk. He was kidding.

(*JACK crosses to the video camera, points it at himself, and whips out an 8-oz carton of milk.*)

JACK: Hi! I'm Max!

(*JACK pretends to guzzle the milk. VIRGINIA runs screaming from the stage.*)

RUPERT: What did you have to go and do that for?

JACK: Oh, come on. She's been annoying all of us with the no-meat stuff since elementary school. You wanted that to happen as much as I did.

CLIFF: I'm sorry, Rupert. I know this was the wrong time for that, but I couldn't resist. I'll go find Virginia and drag her back, but as much as I hate to say it, I agree with Jack. She had it coming.

RUPERT: No. She didn't. She's self-righteous and annoying, but she does the best she can, and she did not deserve to be treated like that! And while we're on the subject of cruel—Cliff, you remember what you said to Jack about dogs playing ball? Where do you get off saying something like that? He's got a right to do what he wants,

however pointless it may be. At least he's good at it! What are you good at? Making snide, insulting remarks to people who annoy you?

CLIFF: That's actually a marketable skill in this country.

RUPERT: You have no room to complain about Jack! None! At least Virginia filled her—empty space by trying to observe other things' right to live! None of us can claim as much!

TIANA: I think you ought to edit Virginia out of the movie.

RUPERT: No. It's my movie. Mine. I'm tired of the rest of you messing with it. If it's going to be a flaming piece of crap, then let it be my flaming piece of crap! We're going to do this my way and if you don't want to go along with it, then get out!

(ALICE shrugs and exits.)

JACK: See ya, Rupe.

RUPERT: You're not allowed to skip out on me!

JACK: I'm not skipping. I'm *willing* to cooperate, but I don't *want* to. Thanks for the out! *(exits)*

TIANA: *(throwing down the puppet)* You're mean, Rupert.

(TIANA exits. It's just RUPERT and CLIFF now.)

RUPERT: So. You going, too?

(CLIFF kisses RUPERT.)

CLIFF: Yeah. I'm going.

RUPERT: *(with confused astonishment)* Why did you kiss me first?

CLIFF: I didn't think you'd let me later.

RUPERT: That's what Miss Teschmacher says when she pulls the kryptonite off of Superman.

CLIFF: I know. I'm proud of you. I need to find Virginia and make sure she's okay. *(clinically)* Then I'm going to go home and cry and maybe throw up for a while. I'll see you in a few days. We can talk then, if you want me back.

RUPERT: Want you back? I never had you in the first place.

CLIFF: Liar.

(BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 8: BACK TO THE FILM CONTEST

The scene opens with the last shot of RUPERT's movie shown at the beginning of the play, with the subtitle "How did this happen? What have I wrought?" appearing at the bottom of the screen. The remainder of the movie now plays out in its entirety. RUPERT is back to being dressed in his dress shirt and tie from the beginning of the play. HE fidgets throughout the movie, messing with his hair and clothes. By the time the lights come up, HE is quite a mess. At the end of the movie, PATTINSON, livid, rises and crosses to C.

PATTINSON: And that was . . . not . . . *Materialism and the Decay of Morality in Postmodern Society* by Rupert Newell. Our judges will now pick our winners . . . and losers.

(The JUDGES begin talking to one another and writing.)

I would like to remind our audience that tonight's runner-up will receive a ribbon, while the winner will receive not only a ribbon, but also the honor of having his or her film shown at Triangle Club gatherings around the country.

(JUDGE #2 crosses to PATTINSON and hands her a red ribbon.)

And our runner-up is, *(glancing at the back of the ribbon)* Matilda Williams, *For the Love of a Special Pony*.

(MATILDA begrudgingly stands and crosses to PATTINSON, resentfully thrusting out a hand to accept her ribbon.)

Matilda, you now have a beautiful red ribbon to show for all the long, hard hours you put into making your film.

(MATILDA returns to her seat. JUDGE #2 hands PATTINSON a blue ribbon.)

And now for our grand prize. A blue ribbon and a national audience go to . . . *(looks at ribbon)* Rupert Newell?

LUCAS: What?

WEBBER: No way!

MATILDA: Are you on crack?

PATTINSON: Obviously, there must be some mistake. *(Tries to hand ribbon back to JUDGE #2.)*

JUDGE #2: There's no mistake. Rupert won.

PATTINSON: What!?

RUPERT: I don't want to sound ungrateful, but my movie sucked.

PATTINSON: This is scandalous!

JUDGE #3: *(standing and crossing to C with JUDGE #1 following)* Look, we had no intention of saying this in front of the kids, but if Mrs. Pattinson is going to make an issue out of it—all of the movies were really bad.

JUDGE #1: Rupert's was the only one that wasn't sanctimonious and condescending.

JUDGE #2: It was by far the most honest of the four films.

RUPERT: You're saying I won a crap contest?

JUDGE #1: Pretty much . . .

ALL JUDGES: Yeah.

RUPERT: Okay. I can live with that.

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