

EVERYTHING BUT

By Alan Haehnel

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EVERYTHING BUT

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SYNOPSIS: The cast of “*Everything But*” starts the play by taking a company bow. When no one applauds, they comically explain how they decided to have all the pleasant parts of a play—such as the t-shirts, the applause, the costume choices—and none of the unpleasant parts—like the nerve-wracking auditions, the disappointments of the cast list, the memorization. By the time they are done explaining and demonstrating their clever scheme for doing everything but the play itself, the cast can finally take its bow and garner, at last, its well-earned applause.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(15-58 Either; Gender flexible, Doubling possible.)

JOE.....	Actor in this non-play (8 lines)
MONICA	Actor in this non-play (7 lines)
JESSE.....	Actor in this non-play (20 lines)
SAMANTHA.....	Actor in this non-play (8 lines)
DUANE	Actor in this non-play (8 lines)
NORMA.....	Actor in this non-play (17 lines)
XAVIER	Actor in this non-play (8 lines)
MINDY.....	Actor in this non-play (25 lines)
DANIELLE.....	Actor in this non-play (7 lines)
STEPHEN.....	Actor in this non-play (5 lines)
MERRILL.....	Actor in this non-play (17 lines)
JON	Actor in this non-play (14 lines)
ALICIA.....	Actor in this non-play (18 lines)
CORI.....	Actor in this non-play (5 lines)
BRITTANY.....	Actor in this non-play (17 lines)
LAURA.....	Actor in this non-play (5 lines)
TEDDY.....	Actor in this non-play (12 lines)
EMMA	Actor in this non-play (22 lines)
MCKENZIE.....	Actor in this non-play (6 lines)
CHRISTIAN	Actor in this non-play (5 lines)
ALLISON	Very nervous auditioner (4 lines)
JACK	Confident auditioner (10 lines)
ANXIOUS 1-10	Responding to the cast list (1-3 lines each)

CATTY 1-4.....	Complaining about the cast list (3-8 lines each)
MRS. GALLIVANT	Temperamental teacher/director (21 lines)
MEMORY STUDENT	Actor with a hard time memorizing (21 lines)
MEMORY DAD	Father enduring the memorization process of Memory Student (22 lines)
STAGE MANAGER.....	(32 lines)
HAPPY DIRECTOR.....	(11 lines)
ALLISON'S THOUGHTS	(3 lines)
ASKER	(10 lines)
TECHIES 1-3.....	(24 lines each)
CRAZY AUDITIONS 1-3	(1 line each)
RECALL 1-9.....	Players remembering being in a play (2 lines each)

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET: A random jumble of whatever is available

AUTHOR'S NOTE

Raid costume closets; pull random set pieces; get the most visually interesting hodge-podge of stuff you can, and throw it all on stage! "Everything But" should be the epitome of flexibility. Feel free, as well, to double up or re-assign lines to accommodate your cast size.

PROPERTIES

- Deck of playing cards
- A Play script
- Cup of coffee

EVERYTHING BUT

AT RISE: *Curtain opens to a CAST lined up, wearing a wide variety of costumes. The set is a hodgepodge. The CAST takes a big company bow, as if at the end of a show. After THEY bow, the lights go down to very dim. In the dimness, we hear someone speak.*

JOE: Uh, they didn't clap.

MONICA: I was pretty disappointed by that.

JESSE: I was hoping for a standing O.

SAMANTHA: Maybe they were confused.

DUANE: I guess I can see why.

NORMA: We should probably explain.

XAVIER: Lights up, please! Lights back up!

The lights come back up.

MINDY: Hello.

DANIELLE: As you probably heard us saying in the semi-darkness, we had hoped you would clap when we bowed.

STEPHEN: I mean, it is customary to clap when people bow onstage, especially a large group like us. I'm just saying.

MERRILL: However, we do realize that we sprang something pretty new on you, our audience.

JON: True. Customarily, before you clap at the end of a play, you have experienced a few things.

ALICIA: Right. Such as the beginning of the play.

CORI: The middle of the play.

BRITTANY: And the end.

LAURA: Usually you get to the end, unless the play uses a fogger and it sets off the fire alarm and everyone has to evacuate and the fire department won't allow you back into the building. That happened at my old school.

TEDDY: Customarily, as we were saying, before you applaud at the end of a production, you have witnessed... a production.

EMMA: We decided to skip that part, though. So, here we are, ready to take a bow; there you are, with hands fully capable of clapping. We'll do our thing; you do your thing. (*To the CAST.*) Ready to try the bow again?

MCKENZIE: Wait, wait, wait!

EMMA: What, what, what?

MCKENZIE: I really don't think we've explained enough. I mean, you only said, "We decided to skip that part." Why?

EMMA: You know why.

MCKENZIE: I know I know why, but they (*Referring to the audience.*) don't know why.

CHRISTIAN: Are you sure we really have to go through all this just to get some decent applause? Can't somebody just hold up a sign?

JOE: Ladies and gentlemen, you've paid your money; you've given us your time. We owe you an explanation.

CHRISTIAN: Forget the sign, I guess.

MONICA: Plays are hard.

JESSE: Plays are time-consuming.

SAMANTHA: Plays are frustrating.

DUANE: Plays are expensive.

NORMA: And yet, whenever we get finished with a play, we always say things like...

XAVIER: That was such a blast!

MINDY: I miss it!

DANIELLE: I don't know what I'm going to do with myself now!

STEPHEN: I feel like a part of me has died.

MERRILL: There seems to be a definite disconnect here. We go through something hard, time-consuming, frustrating and expensive, yet we say it was the time of our life.

JON: Exactly. But when you examine what people actually miss when they are finished being in a play...

SEVERAL ACTORS huddle together—the RECALLS.

RECALL 1: Remember when I forgot that entrance? That was so funny!

RECALL 2: Remember when John chased Margot in the green room and she fell into the face powder? Poof!

RECALL 3: Remember how much we screamed when the cast list came out and we were the leads?

RECALL 4: I love the backstage pandemonium.

RECALL 5: I love trying on the costumes.

RECALL 6: I love wearing the show t-shirts.

EVERYTHING BUT

RECALL 7: I love the feeling of the lights...

RECALL 8: The laughter of the audience...

RECALL 9: And the rush you get at the end when everyone is clapping!

ALL RECALLS: It's great!

The RECALLS rejoin the rest of the CAST.

JON: Right. But notice how none of those aspects of the play had anything to do with the play itself?

ALICIA: You could have heard pretty much the same comments after performing in *Peter Pan* or *Hamlet*.

CORI: Or "The Spaceman's Visit to Kalamazoo." It was something my aunt wrote. She forced me to be in it when I was five. I'm still in counseling.

BRITTANY: So, we decided, this year, to avoid all the tough, time-consuming, expensive stuff, and just do all the fun stuff!

LAURA: Take auditions, right? Fun?

TEDDY: No way! Torturous!

EMMA: Your stomach churns, your intestines twist, your heart thuds, your throat closes, your brain seizes, your very soul withers!

ALLISON comes forward, as if auditioning.

ALLISON: Hi. My name is Allison. I think. Yes, that's my name. No—let me check that. Yes, I'm still Allison. Hi. Um, I'm going to be performing a monologue from... I can't remember the name of the play. I think it starts with G.

MCKENZIE: And the whole time, you're thinking...

ALLISON'S THOUGHTS: I'm blowing this.

ALLISON: Grape... no... Great... Great something. By... somebody. Or maybe the playwright's name starts with a G. Gr... Graham! Graham Cracker! No, that's not it.

ALLISON'S THOUGHTS: I am totally messing this up. The director hates me. He despises me. He's not going to cast me for anything!

ALLISON: My name is Taylor. No, I'm Allison. Taylor is my guppy's name. Anyway, it's a monologue. My guppy's not a monologue. I am. I mean, what I'm going to say is. Here goes. I forgot the first line.

ALLISON'S THOUGHTS: The director is going to issue a restraining order forbidding me from coming within ten miles of the theater, I'm so bad!

ALLISON: I think the first line starts with a G. Or a B. It starts with a letter of the alphabet, I'm sure of that. Did I tell you that I'm a guppy? I mean that I'm a monologue? I think my name starts with a G. My name is Gallison. Oh, wow. No. Okay. Do you mind if I start again?

TEDDY: The audition process—stress beyond belief.

EMMA: So, this year, we did still have auditions, but they were different.

JACK: Hi. My name is Jack. I'm here to audition.

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Perfect. You're in.

JACK: I am? Don't I have to do anything?

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Sure. What would you like to do?

JACK: I could... recite a monologue if you want.

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Do you want to recite a monologue?

JACK: Not really.

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Then don't. What do you want to do?

JACK: I think I'd like to, um, brag about my new sneakers.

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Great. Go for it.

JACK: Well, I custom designed my new sneakers on-line. They're fifteen different colors, twelve different patterns, and I sent a picture of my science teacher in to have embossed on the soles so I can step on his face. They cost me \$600.00 per sneaker. I got them for my birthday because my family is filthy rich. How was that?

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Loved it.

JACK: So, you say I'm in the play?

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Absolutely.

JACK: Do you know what kind of role I'm getting?

HAPPY DIRECTOR: A top one.

JACK: A lead?

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Yup.

JACK: Hey, that's great!

HAPPY DIRECTOR: It sure is. Thanks for auditioning.

CHRISTIAN: That's how it was for everybody. They auditioned however they wanted...

CRAZY AUDITION 1: I'm going to plug my left nostril, and then I'm going to hum through my right one, and then I'm going to use my finger to tap on my right nostril, and then you should hear the tune "Jingle Bells."

SHE begins to do that.

CRAZY AUDITION 2: Hi. Rather than recite a single monologue, I'm going to perform *A Midsummer Night's Dream* in its entirety, from memory. I should be done in approximately three and a half hours, not counting intermissions. "Now, fair Hippolyta, our nuptial hour draws on apace."

CRAZY AUDITION 3: For my audition, I will stare at you uncomfortably for a while. (*SHE does so.*) There, I'm done.

NORMA: And the response everyone got was universally welcoming and affirming.

HAPPY DIRECTOR: Nice job, great job, loved it. You're in; you're a lead. So glad you came.

CHRISTIAN: So, with that audition process, we also avoided one of the horrible aspects of any play production—the posting of the cast list.

ANXIOUS 1: Has he posted it yet?

ANXIOUS 2: Not yet.

ANXIOUS 3: When?

ANXIOUS 4: I thought you said you didn't want to see it.

ANXIOUS 3: I don't! When was he going to post it?

ANXIOUS 4: After school, but...

ANXIOUS 3: I know I'm not going to get in, but what if I do? No, no, I can't even think about it. But maybe this time... no! No! I can't get my hopes up just to have them dashed again. The suspense is killing me. It's killing me, I tell you! When is he posting it?

ANXIOUS 5: The cast list is up!

EVERYONE crowds to one side of the stage.

JOE: Inevitably, there are a few screams of delight.

ANXIOUS 6: I got it! I got the lead female! I can't believe it!

ANXIOUS 7: Yes! The lead male! Bring it on! Oh, yeah!

MONICA: A few people beside themselves with joy.

ANXIOUS 5: Hug me. I got the part I wanted. Please give me a hug. I am a success. Hello, I don't know you, but you should hug me. Hi, hug please. Hugs, hugs, hugs! Life is fabulous!

JOE: But just as inevitably...

ANXIOUS 8: No! Not again!

ANXIOUS 9: How could this happen?

ANXIOUS 10: Failure, failure, failure, everywhere I look is failure!

ANXIOUS 8: I remembered every line for the audition, my mother made five dozen oatmeal-coconut-chocolate chip cookies for the drama club bake sale, I've kissed up to the director since the first day of school—no, since before that! I rode my bike past his house and threw a rose on his porch every day of the summer, including during the heat wave when my tires were melting into the pavement. I collected cans and bottles and saved up \$300.00 for acting classes. I did everything! Everything! How could I end up in the chorus again?

ANXIOUS 10: Don't hug me. I don't deserve to be hugged. No hugs for me. No physical contact. I am a drama leper.

MONICA: Generally speaking, the ratio of joy to despair on the day of the posting is five to one.

SMALL ANXIOUS GROUP: Yay!

MUCH LARGER ANXIOUS GROUP: Waaa!

JESSE: What can you do, though? If you're going to put on a play, you have to have auditions.

SAMANTHA: They're a necessary evil.

DUANE: Like dentist appointments.

NORMA: Or having your Aunt Donna over for Thanksgiving even though her perfume is putrid and its scent, combined with the smell of in-the-bird stuffing, makes you leave the table and puke every year.

SAMANTHA: A necessary evil.

MONICA: But, with our plan this year, the ratio of joy to despair was five to none!

ALL but DANIELLE: Yay!

DANIELLE: Waaa. Actually, just kidding. Yay!

THE FULL GROUP: We got a lead!

DANIELLE: Me, too!

ALL: Yay! Give us a hug!

CORI: Hugs, kisses, congratulations, flowers, happy texts and tweets and Facebook updates...

ALL: (*Phones out, thumbs texting.*) Yay! Give us a hug!

ALICIA: Absolutely everyone was happy!

BRITTANY: Well...

ALICIA: What?

BRITTANY: I did miss one thing, though I kind of hate to admit it.

ALICIA: What did you miss?

BRITTANY: It'll make me sound like a bad person.

XAVIER: If it's any consolation, we already know you're a bad person.

BRITTANY: Really?

XAVIER: Oh, yeah—common knowledge.

BRITTANY: Okay, then, I'll admit it: I missed the catty gossip after the cast posting.

XAVIER: Oh, that.

CATTY 1: She didn't deserve that part.

CATTY 2: I know why she got it.

CATTY 3: Really, why?

CATTY 2: Well, you know how the director has that collection of famous toenails?

CATTY 4: He does?

CATTY 2: You've never seen it? Oh, my gosh—he shows it off every year. It's disgusting. Clippings from Winston Churchill, Richard Nixon, Liberace...

CATTY 1: He has them all in little jewelry boxes.

CATTY 2: Yeah, well, guess who happened to give the director his most recent, highly-prized addition to his collection, a clipping from the pinky toe of Orson Wells?

CATTY 3: Who?

CATTY 2: Some famous guy. I think wells were named after him. Anyway, do you know who gave it to him?

CATTY 1: Who?

CATTY 2: Gina's father, that's who!

CATTY 3: That's how she got the part? With a toenail clipping?

CATTY 2: How else? Talent? Vocal ability?

CATTY 4: Well, she did do a pretty nice job in the call-back, singing six octaves all in perfect tune.

CATTY 2: She got the part by bribing the director with a toenail clipping, I guarantee!

CATTY 3: That's so unfair.

CATTY 1: That's totally wrong.

CATTY 3: I deserved that part, but just because my father doesn't collect clippings from famous guys—oh, that makes me so mad.

CATTY 4: Me, too.

CATTY 1: I'm going to carry a grudge for, like, ever.

CATTY 3: How can you not?

XAVIER: So you miss that part, huh?

BRITTANY: Like I said, I hate to admit it, but I do. Isn't that awful?

XAVIER: Frankly, yes.

BRITTANY: Well, I won't say what I heard about you!

STEPHEN: Despite the slight loss, if you can call it that, of the pleasure of back-biting gossip, the audition process was a fabulous success!

ALL: Yay! Give us a hug!

SAMANTHA: So, you may well wonder, what have we been up to between the posting of the audition results...

ALL: Hug us!

SAMANTHA: And the actual run of the show?

MONICA: What about the rehearsals, the memorization, the set builds, the costume fittings—all of those crucial aspects of every play production?

JON: We did it all! Only, kind of differently.

TEDDY: Rehearsals, for instance, looked something like this.

A bunch of KIDS sit around playing cards. The STAGE MANAGER comes in.

STAGE MANAGER: Where's Joe?

DANIELLE: He had to get a haircut.

STEPHEN: About time.

STAGE MANAGER: Where's Monica?

MERRILL: She's visiting a college.

STAGE MANAGER: She's only a freshman.

EVERYTHING BUT

MERRILL: She's looking into doing early, early, super-duper early admissions. The schools charge you triple tuition, but you're guaranteed a spot on the wait list when you're a senior.

STAGE MANAGER: Where's Jesse?

ALICIA: Her cat's sick.

STAGE MANAGER: I thought her cat died.

ALICIA: She got another one.

STAGE MANAGER: Since yesterday?

ALICIA: Yeah. She found it last night.

STAGE MANAGER: Really? What did she name it?

ALICIA: Roadkill.

STAGE MANAGER: Cute.

ALICIA: Yeah, but it's sick. It's probably going to die. She stayed home with it.

STAGE MANAGER: Where are Jon, Doug and MaryAnne?

JON: Oh, they quit. They're not doing the play.

TEDDY: But none of us are doing the play.

JON: I know, but they said they couldn't make the commitment.

STAGE MANAGER: What about Samantha?

CORI: Voice lesson.

STAGE MANAGER: Duane?

LAURA: SAT prep classes.

STAGE MANAGER: Norma?

EMMA: Had to catch up on back episodes of Modern Family.

STAGE MANAGER: Xavier?

MINDY: Family reunion. In Germany. He'll be back in three weeks.

STAGE MANAGER: Wow. We have fewer than half the kids who were called for today.

DANIELLE: Bummer.

STEPHEN: Want us to deal you in?

STAGE MANAGER: Sure.

JON: I just have to tell you, from the stage manager's perspective, how much less stressful this method of play practice is. I mean, in years past, the stage manager was the proverbial messenger you aren't supposed to shoot, you know? She always had to be the one to bring the bad news to the director.

STAGE MANAGER: Um, Mrs. Gallivant...

MRS. GALLIVANT: How's the attendance for today?

STAGE MANAGER: Not so hot.

MRS. GALLIVANT: How many are we missing?

STAGE MANAGER: Um... about half.

MRS. GALLIVANT: Half?

STAGE MANAGER: Most of them have legitimate excuses.

MRS. GALLIVANT: Half?

STAGE MANAGER: Work schedules, makeup exams, a couple college visits...

MRS. GALLIVANT: Half?

STAGE MANAGER: One broken arm, two home sick, three couldn't get rides... and a partridge in a pear tree.

MRS. GALLIVANT: We're missing half of the kids I scheduled tonight?

STAGE MANAGER: That was a joke, about the partridge. From the Christmas carol?

MRS. GALLIVANT: What am I supposed to do with only half the group? What is it with these kids? How can they expect me to put together a production when they can't even bother to show up? I swear...

JON: And off she would go. Don't shoot the messenger, right? Being a stage manager was like facing the firing squad every day.

STAGE MANAGER: I know, Mrs. Gallivant, but...

MRS. GALLIVANT: If they think we can just pull this together at the last minute, that they can just come waltzing in here when they're good and ready, they've got another think coming! Not to mention...

JON: A firing squad where everybody's got a machine gun.

MRS. GALLIVANT: I should kick them all out, that's what I should do! Kick out every last one of them! I don't care if I'm left with two students! One! Give me one devoted student! That's all I ask for!

JON: And a small nuclear arsenal.

MRS. GALLIVANT: We'll do a monologue! That'll teach them! Never mind. I quit. Forget it. Let's just see how they get along without me, those ingrates! Those little brats! I'm not going to waste my time and talents trying to put together a show if they can't even bother to show up!

STAGE MANAGER: Mrs. G, I'm sure they don't mean to...

MRS. GALLIVANT: I'm locking myself in my office. I'm done. Let them figure it out on their own.

EVERYTHING BUT

JON: A firing squad that, after it's done shooting you and blowing you up, locks itself in a small room and refuses to come out until it's bribed with specialty caffeinated beverages.

STAGE MANAGER: I got you a Starbucks Caramel Macchiato. Can you smell it? I'm blowing the fumes under your door.

MRS. GALLIVANT: Has it got the brown swirlies on top?

STAGE MANAGER: Complete with swirlies.

MRS. GALLIVANT: Who made it?

STAGE MANAGER: The manager, Luigi. I told him it was for you. He put extra swirlies.

MRS. GALLIVANT: How many creamers did you bring me?

STAGE MANAGER: 13, like always. And eight packets of Sweet 'n Low.

MRS. GALLIVANT: All right, I'm coming out. Get the cast together.

JON: Every day a battle for the poor stage manager. But not any more! She got to play cards with the rest of us.

LAURA: Do you have any queens?

STAGE MANAGER: Go fish.

MCKENZIE: Gone, too, were the hours and hours of memorization, when you drove everyone in your family crazy.

MEMORY DAD: What are you mumbling about?

MEMORY STUDENT: I'm not mumbling. I'm trying to memorize my lines.

MEMORY DAD: Well, do it somewhere else. I'm watching t.v.

MEMORY STUDENT: You could help me, you know.

MEMORY DAD: Why should I?

MEMORY STUDENT: Because you're my father and my success in life is supposed to be of utmost importance to you and you'd throw yourself in front of a speeding train to save my life but you can't even turn off the t.v. long enough to help me memorize a few lines for the play which I signed up for only because I wanted to do well so you'd be proud of me, your son, the fruit of your loins?

MEMORY DAD: Was that a guilt trip or what?

MEMORY STUDENT: It was intended to be.

MEMORY DAD: Give me the script. Where are you?

MEMORY STUDENT: Page two.

MEMORY DAD: You've only memorized through page two? This thing is—89 pages long!

MEMORY STUDENT: And I'm supposed to be off book tomorrow.

MEMORY DAD: What part are you playing?

MEMORY STUDENT: Samuel. Read me the first cue on page two.

MEMORY DAD: "Where are you going?"

MEMORY STUDENT: Uh... give me the first word.

MEMORY DAD: "Out."

MEMORY STUDENT: Wow. Give me the next word.

MEMORY DAD: That's the first word, the middle word, the last word.

MEMORY STUDENT: I say "Out, out, out"?

MEMORY DAD: No, it's the only word. Uncle Norbert says, "Where are you going?" and you say, "Out." That's the whole line.

MEMORY STUDENT: All right. Try again.

MEMORY DAD: "Where are you going?"

MEMORY STUDENT: Uh...

MEMORY DAD: Oh, come on!

MEMORY STUDENT: Don't pressure me!

MEMORY DAD: "Out!"

MEMORY STUDENT: I thought you were going to help me!

MEMORY DAD: I'm not telling you to get out. I'm telling you, the line is the word "out."

MEMORY STUDENT: Right, right. Give me the cue again.

MEMORY DAD: "Where are you going?"

MEMORY STUDENT: Out.

MEMORY DAD: "Out, what do you mean, out? I'm not letting you leave here until you tell me just where you're going."

MEMORY STUDENT: Hm. Boy. How does this next part go?

MEMORY DAD: "I'm going out somewhere where you'll never find me, Uncle Norbert. I'm going out and I'm never coming back. I'm going out into the world, to find my place in the universe, to discover who I am and where I am in this great big thing called life. I'm going out because, until I take a risk, I'm never going to discover things as they really are." When do have to have this memorized by?

MEMORY STUDENT: Tomorrow. Feed me the cue again.

MEMORY DAD: "I'm not letting you leave here until you tell me just where you're going."

MEMORY STUDENT: Uh... give me the first word.

MEMORY DAD: Out.

MEMORY STUDENT: That was my other line.

EVERYTHING BUT

MEMORY DAD: It's mine now, in real life. Out, son. Memorize somewhere else. I'm watching television.

MEMORY STUDENT: But my success! I want to make you proud! The train tracks!

MEMORY DAD: Out, out, out!

MCKENZIE: Heart-breaking, no?

JOE: Tragic, yes?

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