

REALITY CHECK

By Alan Haehnel

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CHARACTERS

MONICA	Joe's girlfriend-to-be	RITA	Poetry tutor
JOE	Monica's boyfriend-to-be	MARGO	Health seeker
KENDRA	Cheerleader	KELLY	Health seeker
SHAWNA	Cheerleader	JENNA	Health seeker
LAURA	Cheerleader	SAM	Health seeker
MEGAN	Cheerleader	NIKO	Health seeker
DEANNE	Cheerleader	MR. SMITH	R.C.C. leader
LIZ	Cheerleader	MR. SMYTHE	R.C.C. leader
MCKENZIE	Poetry student	MISS SMITHY	R.C.C. leader
JIM	Poetry student	BOB	R.C.C. leader

PRODUCTION NOTES: The set for “Reality Check” should be very simple and flexible to facilitate easy moves from one scene to the next. Just chairs would do fine.

PROPS LIST

Stack of Cards—invitations to the R.C.C. meeting

Clipboard

Syringe

PRODUCTION HISTORY: The premiere of “Reality Check” was on December 12, 2011, performed by Blue Valley North High School's Advanced Acting Class, Overland Park, Kansas. It was directed by Ryan Lea Thomas and featured the following cast:

Brandi Bates	RITA
Charlie Betzleberger.....	MR. SMYTHE
Graham Schmidt.....	MR. SMITH
Joseph Bricker.....	JIM
Meg Wagner.....	MISS SMITHY
Eleanor Kenyon.....	MONICA
Brooks Riekhof.....	JOE
Lizzy Martino.....	MCKENZIE
Ryan Shapiro.....	BOB
Meagan Mathison.....	MARGO, DEANNE
Keenan Wagner.....	SAM
Molly Adams.....	KENDRA, KELLY
Aaron Lawrence.....	NIKKO
Kimi Downing.....	LIZ, SHAWNA
Caroline Adams.....	JENNA, MEGAN
Sydney Taylor.....	LAURA
Ryan Lea Thomas.....	CHEERLEADER

Do Not Copy

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(Lights up on JOE and MONICA. THEY obviously like each other very much.)

JOE: Hey, Monica.

MONICA: Hi, Joe.

JOE: Um... that was a great time Saturday.

MONICA: It was. It was awesome. It was all... it was a great movie and...

JOE: The food.

MONICA: The food was really good. I've never been to a place like that, where you sit on the floor.

JOE: I hope that was okay.

MONICA: Oh, it was! It was a lot of fun. I'm going to eat on the floor all the time now!

JOE: Probably not in the caf.

MONICA: No, that's... that would be awkward, I think.

JOE: Definitely.

MONICA: So.

JOE: So. Uh....

(MR. SMITH appears, sneaking. JOE and MONICA don't see him.)

Math next, huh?

MONICA: How did you know that?

JOE: Well...

MONICA: You know my schedule?

JOE: Not really. Except that first period you have band or choir, depending on the day; second is English; third is gym, with me—and a bunch of other kids—and you're pretty dangerous with a floor hockey stick; fourth is lunch; fifth is social studies; sixth—coming right up—is math; and seventh you have biology. Other than that, I don't know your schedule at all. Oh, and you play soccer after school until 5:00, unless you have a game. Which you do, tomorrow, away.

MONICA: That's pretty...

JOE: Creepy?

MONICA: No. Sweet.

JOE: Yeah?

MONICA: Mm-hm.

JOE: You're going to be late for class.

MONICA: I... think I don't care. You're going to be late for pottery.

JOE: You know I have pottery, huh?

MONICA: Sort of.

JOE: So, uh, what's Friday like for you?

MONICA: I might have a game.

JOE: Nope. Just practice.

MONICA: Then Friday is... pretty open. For the right activity.

JOE: Okay. What activity would be the right one?

MONICA: Anything that might involve, um... you?

(MR. SMITH comes forward with two cards in his hand. HE hands them to MONICA and JOE.)

MR. SMITH: Here.

JOE: What?

MR. SMITH: You two need these.

MONICA: What are they?

MR. SMITH: Scheduling cards. You have an appointment with the R.C.C.

JOE: What's that?

MONICA: Is this because we're tardy?

MR. SMITH: All questions will be answered at the appointment. I'll make your teachers aware. Don't be late. *(MR. SMITH exits.)*

MONICA: The R.C.C.? Do you know...?

JOE: I have no clue.

MONICA: Well, I'd better get going.

JOE: Yeah, okay. Talk to you later?

MONICA: Definitely. Text me, okay? Do you have my number?

JOE: #1 on my phone.

MONICA: Mine, too. Yours, I mean. 'Bye.

JOE: See you.

(MONICA and JOE exit. Cross-fade to a CHEER LEADING SQUAD practicing a routine. After THEY go through it, KENDRA, the squad leader, addresses them.)

KENDRA: Guys, that was really sloppy.

MEGAN: We have to practice more.

DEANNE: When's coach coming back?

KENDRA: We can't count on coach; she just had her baby. We have to make progress on our own or we're not going to be ready for districts. Can everybody make it tomorrow?

(MISS SMITHY enters, sneaking. SHE watches the SQUAD; THEY don't see her.)

SHAWNA: I've got SAT prep.

MEGAN: Shawna, come on!

SHAWNA: What? My dad paid for the classes—he'll kill me if I miss them.

LAURA: I can't make it, either.

KENDRA: Why not?

DEANNE: This is great.

LAURA: Dentist appointment.

MEGAN: Can't you reschedule?

LAURA: No way—this guy schedules like six months in advance.

KENDRA: Guys, do I really have to remind you what's at stake here?

LIZ: We know, we know! We've never missed advancing past districts, pride of the school, pride of the squad, yada, yada, yada.

MEGAN: Hey, what's that all about?

KENDRA: What's with the attitude, Liz?

DEANNE: Don't you want to win?

LIZ: Of course I want to win; of course I want to advance. But getting another lecture about "what's at stake" isn't going to help us do that.

KENDRA: Oh, and what is?

LIZ: Practice. We have to find a time to practice—for like, hours. What about Saturday morning?

LAURA: How early?

LIZ: I'm thinking seven o'clock.

LAURA: On a Saturday?

LIZ: Do we want this or not?

MEGAN: She's right! Nobody can say they have SAT practice or dentist appointments or singing lessons or whatever else at seven o'clock on Saturday morning. Maybe we should go even earlier!

LIZ: I'm in.

KENDRA: I'll do 2:00 a.m., if that's what it takes.

(MISS SMITHY interrupts. SHE hands out cards to ALL the SQUAD MEMBERS.)

MISS SMITHY: Pardon me, everyone. These are for you.

DEANNE: Who are you?

MISS SMITHY: That's immaterial.

SHAWNA: What's the deal with this? *(reading)* "The R.C.C. requires your attendance tomorrow morning at the start of first period."

LAURA: What's an R.C.C.?

LIZ: Really Complicated Cockroaches?

MISS SMITHY: Wrong. The school requires your attendance. Your teacher will be notified and will excuse you from classes. Be there.

KENDRA: Wait a minute! You can't just...

MISS SMITHY: I can just. I did just. You will just. Be there.

(MISS SMITHY exits. ALL of the SQUAD MEMBERS look at one another quizzically as the lights fade on them. THEY come up on MCKENZIE, JIM and RITA.)

MCKENZIE: Rita, you've got to help us with this poetry stuff. The test is tomorrow!

JIM: Yeah, we don't get it.

RITA: I can try. I'm not an expert.

JIM: Yeah, right. Mrs. D is always calling on you after everybody else gets the wrong answer.

MCKENZIE: Plus you write great poems.

RITA: The test isn't going to ask us to write poetry.

MCKENZIE: No, it's going to have questions on meter—iambic whatchamacallit and all that stuff.

RITA: "Iambic whatchamacallit." Interesting.

JIM: No, pentagram!

RITA: Close. Pentameter.

MCKENZIE: Yeah, and then all these other things.

JIM: Dactyls and anapests and trochees. What the heck is a trochee?

RITA: All right, first, do you get what meter is?

MCKENZIE: I thought I did, before we started talking about poetry.

RITA: What did you understand about it?

MCKENZIE: When you're running track, 100 meters is a sprint, 200 meters is half the track, 400...

RITA: All right, that's totally different. In poetry, meter is about rhythm. It's about how the words and syllables rise and fall.

JIM: Right.

RITA: It's so ingrained in our language that we hardly notice it, but the poet tries to really work with the stressed and unstressed syllables to add to the musical quality of the poem.

JIM: So some are stressed and some are unstressed and some are long and some are short?

(BOB sneaks in. No one sees him watching.)

RITA: No, long and short are just different words for stressed and unstressed syllables.

MCKENZIE: What?

RITA: All right, remember when Mrs. D had us do that worksheet with different words on it and she wanted us to mark which syllables were stressed, which were unstressed?

MCKENZIE: I got that totally wrong.

JIM: I guessed one right. And then I changed it at the last minute because I never trust my guesses.

RITA: Take a word. Give me a word.

MCKENZIE: "Blue."

RITA: No. It has to have more than one syllable.

JIM: "Green."

RITA: More than one syllable. At least two parts to it—you know what a syllable is, right?

MCKENZIE: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

JIM: Okay—how about "supercalifragilisticexpialidocious."

RITA: Way too complicated.

MCKENZIE: It's got rhythm, right?

JIM: And lots of syllables.

(JIM and MCKENZIE start to sing the song from Mary Poppins.)

RITA: Stop! Guys, do you want my help or not?

MCKENZIE: I can't fail this test.

RITA: Then don't sing. Take an easy word. How about "dinner"?

JIM: No, thanks; I just ate.

MCKENZIE: Cut it out!

JIM: I thought she was asking me out. I am irresistible, you know.

RITA: Which syllable of the word "dinner" gets greater stress?

MCKENZIE: The "d."

RITA: Which syllable?

JIM: The third one.

RITA: It only has two.

JIM: Oh. Then the second one.

RITA: Do you agree, McKenzie?

MCKENZIE: No. The first one.

RITA: That's right.

MCKENZIE: That's what I'm talking about!

JIM: No biggie. I was only guessing again.

RITA: So can you explain to Jim how the stress is on the first syllable and not the second?

MCKENZIE: Yeah. Because... it is. Because if it wasn't, it would be on the second. But it's not—it's on the first.

JIM: Uh, hint for your future, Kenzie—don't be a teacher.

RITA: It's the sound of the word. We don't say "dinNER." We say "DINner." Do you hear it? Do you hear the difference?

MCKENZIE: Sometimes I say "dinNER."

RITA: No, you don't.

JIM: You were just guessing, too! You don't get this!

RITA: I wasn't totally guessing! I was—saying the opposite of what you said because I figured you were wrong.

JIM: You're not going to be able to look at my answers on the test and then choose the opposite.

(BOB comes out from hiding. HE has three cards which HE hands to MCKENZIE, RITA and JIM.)

BOB: Hello. Take these. Good-bye.

JIM: Whoa, whoa, dude, what are you talking about?

BOB: The card has all the information you need. Ignore it at your peril.
Good-bye.

JIM: Dude, you don't just hand people cards and then...

(But BOB is gone.)

RITA: Who was that?

MCKENZIE: I have no idea.

RITA: Are you guys in trouble or something?

JIM: Hey, he handed the cards to all of us.

RITA: I was just trying to help.

MCKENZIE: We were just trying to be helped.

JIM: *(reading)* You are required to meet with the R.C.C. What's the R.C.C.?

RITA: I don't know, but this all looks like trouble, and I can't afford any of it when I'm trying to apply for colleges. I'm going to guidance to find out what this is about.

MCKENZIE: Me, too!

RITA: No, not with me.

MCKENZIE: Why not?

RITA: Just... I was trying to be nice, I was trying to be helpful, but...

JIM: I got it—we're dumb. It's okay if we get in trouble. But Miss Harvard bound and her precious record...

MCKENZIE: Oh, is that it?

RITA: Frankly, not exactly, but close enough. I have to go. *(RITA exits.)*

JIM: Oh, well, so do we. I have a polo match to get to.

MCKENZIE: Yeah, and I'm late for my interview with Donald Trump.

(JIM and MCKENZIE walk off in the opposite direction, prancing arrogantly. The lights cross-fade to MARGO, SAM, KELLY, JENNA and NIKO.)

MARGO: All right, you guys, here's the deal—we're out of shape.

SAM: You think? I couldn't even bench press my box of Ding Dongs last night.

KELLY: I could use some tuning up.

JENNA: I could use a complete rebuild, thank-you very much.

NIKO: Ditto.

MARGO: Right. We're all in the same boat.

JENNA: It's a leaking dinghy.

NIKO: Start bailing!

SAM: That sounds too much like exercise.

MARGO: So, I propose we do something about it. Just because we don't belong to any organized team doesn't mean we can't get in shape.

KELLY: I was thinking of going for a run this afternoon.

JENNA: I was thinking of thinking of going for a run this afternoon.

NIKO: Does planning to exercise burn any calories?

MARGO: Yeah, and I've been planning to start working out and eating better for about, oh, a year? And look how far it's gotten me. I need help.

SAM: (*standing*) Hi, my name is Sam, and I'm a fat slob. I need help.

KELLY, NIKO, JENNA: Hi, Sam.

MARGO: Guys, we joke about this all the time, but I'm actually serious. I mean, it's not like I think I'm a tank or I hate my body or any of that, but I don't want to end up, well... looking like my parents in a few years.

JENNA: I swear, my mother has wings hanging off her arms like a flying squirrel.

(*MR. SMYTHE sneaks in, hidden from the group.*)

NIKO: Every year my dad joins a health club and goes every morning—for about a week.

MARGO: The point is, we can do something! We just need to support each other. We don't need Jenny Craig or personal trainers. We just need each other. We can exercise together; we can remind each other about eating well.

SAM: We could go on binges together! That would be great!

MARGO: Sam!

NIKO: (*mock serious*) Sammy, I think you joke all the time to hide your pain.

SAM: (*playing along*) Oh, my gosh, Niko—you're right! Give me a hug! I just want to get better!

JENNA: Very funny, guys, but are you in or out? I think Margo's right.

MARGO: Thank-you.

NIKO: Well, what are we talking about, here? Weekly weigh-ins? I'm not getting naked in front of you guys.

MARGO: I don't know yet. I think we could set some realistic goals, meet once a week and just see how we did with them. That's one thing.

KELLY: We could definitely exercise together. A lot of articles say it's good to work out with other people.

JENNA: Prom's coming up. I bought my dress last year, but right now I'd pop the sequins right off of it.

SAM: That could look pretty cool. The sequin gun—pow, pow, pow!

MARGO: That's the other thing—we could make sure no one is going overboard. None of us needs to end up anorexic or anything.

KELLY: That's for sure.

MARGO: So what do you say? Is everybody game for this? Can we help each other?

KELLY: I'm in.

NIKO: Sounds good to me.

SAM: Do I have to give up pizza? I sleep with a pizza box, I think you all should know.

JENNA: This would help me, I know that.

MARGO: All right. Sounds like we're all in agreement. This'll be great! So, one of my goals...

(MR. SMYTHE reveals himself. HE has cards for ALL.)

MR. SMYTHE: Cease and desist.

SAM: Whoa! Who let in the suit?

MR. SMYTHE: I have a card for each one of you. On it you will find specific details as to where and when you will be meeting with the R.C.C.

NIKO: The R.C.C.? Regurgitated Crocodile Crumpets?

MR. SMYTHE: Very funny, but you won't be laughing if you miss the meeting.

MARGO: Who are you?

MR. SMYTHE: Be there.

MARGO: Who are you?

MR. SMYTHE: Be there.

JENNA: I think what Margo is trying to ask is, Who in the heck are you?

MR. SMYTHE: I think what I'm trying to answer is, Who in the heck... be there. *(HE exits.)*

NIKO: Who in the heck be there? Is it just me or did that make no sense at all?

JENNA: I guess it made about as much sense as some weird guy popping out of nowhere and handing us these cards.

KELLY: They look official.

MARGO: *(reading)* This is a mandatory meeting. Missing it will be grounds for suspension.

SAM: Do you know what this calls for?

NIKO: What?

SAM: This calls for us all to shrug our shoulders, like this, and say, together, "Huh?" Ready, on three—one, two, three.

ALL: *(shrugging)* Huh?

(The lights go down on the FITNESS GROUP and come up on a meeting area where the R.C.C. representatives—MR. SMITH, MISS SMITHY, BOB and MR. SMYTHE—stand at the front of several rows of chairs. MOST of the rest of the CHARACTERS are seated, though a FEW are still trickling in.)

MR. SMITH: Have a seat, everyone.

MISS SMITHY: We have half a minute remaining before we begin. Sit quietly, please.

JOE: What's this about, anyway?

BOB: Sit quietly!

MR. SMYTHE: *(to MISS SMITHY, who holds a clipboard)* Attendance?

MISS SMITHY: All accounted for except... DeAnne Sykes.

(DEANNE enters.)

DEANNE: I'm here. I'm not late. Present.

MR. SMITH: Find a seat.

MISS SMITHY: And James Reilly.

KELLY: He wasn't here today. I didn't see him in math.

MISS SMITHY: Unacceptable.

MR. SMITH: He'll be here. We contacted his parents.

(JIM enters, coughing, clearly sick.)

JIM: Oh, my aching head. Nobody touch my nose. It hurts.

SAM: Thanks for warning me, Jimbo—I was just about to fondle your nose.

JIM: Shuddup.

KENDRA: They dragged you out of your sickbed to come to this?

JIM: Yup.

KENDRA: What is the matter with you people?

LIZ: Sick kids are supposed to stay home!

(Several ad libs and general grumbling come from the gathered STUDENTS.)

BOB: *(to MR. SMYTHE)* We're over time.

MR. SMYTHE: Ladies and gentleman, I need your full attention... now!

(EVERYONE quiets.)

I think it imperative, before any further disruptions or protests occur, that you all recognize that we, The R.C.C., operate with the full support and authority of your school leadership and are thereby authorized to administer disciplinary action including detention, suspension and even, if need be, expulsion.

MISS SMITHY: (*aside to MR. SMYTHE*) That authorization came through?

MR. SMYTHE: Just this morning.

MISS SMITHY: Excellent.

(*RITA raises her hand.*)

MR. SMITH: Put your hand down. There will be no questions at this point.

RITA: But I think there's been a mistake.

MISS SMITHY: There has been no mistake.

RITA: I don't belong here!

SHAWNA: What, and the rest of us do?

RITA: I don't know, but I can't afford...

MR. SMITH: Enough! Any further talking out of turn will result in administration of the aforementioned disciplinary action!

MISS SMITHY: The purpose of this meeting is to inform, not discuss.

BOB: You all belong here. Believe it.

MR. SMYTHE: And while this may feel punitive, you are not currently in any sort of trouble. You are here for educational purposes.

MR. SMITH: Good. Now, understandably, you all probably have some questions about us and our purpose. Introductions, then, are in order. I am Mr. Smith.

MR. SMYTHE: I am Mr. Smythe.

MISS SMITHY: I am Miss Smithy.

BOB: I'm Bob.

MR. SMITH: Collectively, we are...

ALL R.C.C. MEMBERS: The R.C.C.!

MR. SMITH: Which initials stand for...

MISS SMITHY: The Reality Check Commission.

MR. SMYTHE: That's right. The Reality Check Commission. As you are all well aware, we live in perilous and difficult times.

BOB: Economically, socially, educationally.

MR. SMITH: Thus, more than at any other time in the history of our country, our schools must be highly efficient at aiding students to become the most effective and competitive people in the world.

MISS SMITHY: Your school has had the foresight to bring in us, The R.C.C., to aid in increasing that efficiency.

BOB: Smart move.

MR. SMYTHE: Indeed. Frankly, currently in this school, a great deal of time and energy is wasted on activities that will not ultimately bring results.

MR. SMITH: But the individuals engaged in such activities are not aware of their folly.

MISS SMITHY: That is where we come in. While you are all intelligent people...

SAM: Except Niko.

NIKO: Hey!

MR. SMYTHE: Samuel Wood, one week detention.

SAM: Oh, come on. That wasn't a big...

MR. SMYTHE: Samuel Wood, two weeks detention.

BOB: We're not fooling around, people.

MISS SMITHY: While you are all intelligent, promising students, we observed you involved in a variety of non-productive activities. For instance, Kendra, Megan, DeAnne, Shawna, Laura and Liz—please come forward. Quickly, quickly!

MR. SMYTHE: Time is of the essence.

MR. SMITH: The R.C.C. is nothing if not expeditious.

BOB: Chop, chop, chickies.

(The CHEERLEADING SQUAD has come forward.)

MISS SMITHY: Now, Kendra, would you please tell the group what you and your fellow cheerleaders were doing when I discovered you?

KENDRA: Well, we were practicing.

MISS SMITHY: For what?

LIZ: We've got district competition coming up. Our squad hasn't missed advancing to states for the past 20 years.

MEGAN: We have a lot of work to do.

MISS SMITHY: You feel this is a worthy goal?

KENDRA: Of course it is!

MISS SMITHY: And that is where you are mistaken.

LAURA: What?

DEANNE: How can you say that?

MISS SMITHY: Having analyzed your routine and compared it to the others against whom you will be competing, having considered the impact of your coach's absence, having observed the dysfunctional dynamics of your squad...

SHAWNA: We're not dysfunctional. We get along!

LAURA: Yeah, when you show up.

SHAWNA: Look who's talking!

LAURA: Hey, I've been there a lot more than...

KENDRA: Guys, knock it off!

MISS SMITHY: You won't win at districts this year. You will not advance.

LIZ: You have no right to say that!

MR. SMYTHE: On the contrary, Miss Smithy, as a member of the Reality Check Commission, has every right to say that, as authorized by the school.

MISS SMITHY: My job is to analyze the efficacy of student activities, to root out those areas where individuals are, frankly, wasting time. And while your intentions as a competitor are undoubtedly noble, the outcome is undoubtedly clear: You will fail. Thus, I have recommended to the administration that the squad be disbanded.

KENDRA: What?

LIZ: That's crazy!

MEGAN: You can't just...

MISS SMITHY: I can just. I did just. And, by order of your principal, you will just no longer meet as a squad. This is for your own good. You can devote that time to your studies or to other activities that will lead to success. That will be all. Please be seated.

KENDRA: Now hold on a second!

MISS SMITHY: That will be all!

MR. SMITH: We recognize that our message will require a significant change in your way of thinking...

MR. SMYTHE: And a significant change in your patterns of behavior, but such changes are necessary for progress.

LIZ: We're not going to take this lying down, you know!

BOB: Lying down, sitting up, playing dead, doesn't matter. Done deal.

MISS SMITHY: Liz, you will be seated now. This is your last warning.

(LIZ and the OTHER CHEERLEADERS sit, grudgingly.)

MR. SMITH: Very good. Now, Joseph and Monica, please come forward.

MONICA: *(to JOE)* I don't want to do this.

JOE: We have to, I guess.

MR. SMITH: Joe and Monica, we are on a time schedule.

MONICA: What's he going to say about us?

JOE: I don't know.

MR. SMITH: Joe, Monica...

JOE: We're coming, we're coming!

(JOE and MONICA come up front.)

MR. SMITH: Excellent. Now, when I found these two, they were heavily engaged...

SAM: You guys are engaged? That was quick!

MR. SMYTHE: Add to your two weeks detention, Samuel Wood, two days of in-school suspension.

SAM: Oh, for... just shoot me now!

BOB: Can be arranged.

MR. SMITH: I found Joe and Monica heavily engaged, as I said, in the time-honored tradition of flirting, of establishing a romantic relationship.

MONICA: What's wrong with that?

MR. SMITH: Nothing, of course. Until we've made sufficient scientific advancements, the human species will continue to rely on the process for propagation.

JOE: This isn't about making babies!

MR. SMITH: It's always about making babies, Joseph.

MONICA: I like him. I think he likes me.

JOE: (*taking MONICA's hand*) I do, Monica.

MONICA: You do?

MR. SMITH: Stop now. No need to continue. Let go of her hand. Drop it, Joe.

JOE: I...

MR. SMITH: Drop the hand.

(*JOE does, much to MONICA's disappointment.*)

The point is, this budding teen-age romance has already been and will continue to be an incredible time sink. Long phone calls, thousands of words of text, not to mention hours of distracted staring out the window at the moon and wondering if the love interest is seeing the very same celestial body out their window... horribly inefficient use of time. And for what?

MONICA: For what? For... for love!

JOE: Really?

MONICA: Yes, Joe!

MR. SMITH: No, Joe. Down, Monica. Look, not only are most romances of this category doomed for failure within six months, yours in particular, given your personality types, will not last more than two. While Joe will recover quickly, Monica is highly likely to slip into a depression that will consume weeks more of precious productivity.

JOE: Do you get depressed?

MONICA: Why would you recover so quickly?

MR. SMITH: Joe and Monica, don't waste your time on each other. That's not just true of you two, either. In fact, I will be heading up an R.C.C. initiative to discourage all sexual entanglements whatsoever during the high school years. Think of the energy saved! Thank-you, Joe and Monica—you may have a seat.

(JOE and MONICA go back to the STUDENT GROUP, eyeing one another suspiciously. THEY sit apart from each other. RITA raises her hand again.)

MR. SMYTHE: *(aside to other R.C.C. MEMBERS)* Who is that?

BOB: She's mine. Rita Nibley.

MR. SMYTHE: Miss Nibley, as we previously indicated, this is not the time for questions.

RITA: I just want to be next. Is that possible? I have no idea why I am here, and I would like to go next.

MR. SMYTHE: Bob?

BOB: Fine by me.

MR. SMYTHE: Very well, let us have Rita, Jim and McKenzie come forward.

JIM: Do I have to? I'm about passing out here.

BOB: Front and center, all three of you. Let's make this quick and sharp, like a guillotine.

MCKENZIE: *(to RITA as THEY come forward)* What's a guillotine?

RITA: A large, heavy blade on a pulley, designed for chopping off heads.

MCKENZIE: Oh, nice.

JIM: I wouldn't mind somebody chopping my head off right now, I really wouldn't.

BOB: So, I found these three getting ready for a test.

RITA: May I say something? Reality Check Commission Members— Mr. Smythe, Miss Smithy, Mr. Smith, Bob...thank-you.

JIM: Oh, brother.

RITA: I think the service you are performing for this school is absolutely necessary. I could not agree more that we are desperately in need of greater efficiency.

SAM: *(pretending to cough)* Brown noser!

(ALL four of the R.C.C. MEMBERS' heads swivel around to face SAM. THEY stare at him warningly.)

SAM: What? I coughed. I can't even cough? Maybe Jimbo gave me his... *(seeing the FOUR aren't buying it)* Okay, fine, I'll shut up, sorry.

RITA: But why am I here? I was helping Jim and McKenzie study for a test. Isn't that the very point of school?

MCKENZIE: Yeah, why are we here? We wanted to learn.

JIM: Today I want to go back to bed.

BOB: Whining finished? Good. Fact is, (*indicating RITA*) you were wasting your time trying to teach these two because *they* were never going to understand the concepts you were going over.

RITA: I was trying to help.

BOB: Pearls before swine.

JIM: Hey!

BOB: Hey yourself. We're all swine in certain areas. I can't play basketball to save my life. If I started dribbling ten hours a day hoping to get in the NBA, I would need a reality check. You and McKenzie trying to learn about dactyls and anapests is like me dribbling; Rita trying to teach you is like Michael Jordan coaching a one-legged midget. I don't like talking this much. Three words: Give. It. Up. Three more: Sit. Back. Down.

RITA: I understand completely. To tell you the truth, I didn't really want to help these two.

MCKENZIE: Oh, very nice, Rita!

BOB: Two words and one gesture: Shut. It.

(HE claps his fingers together to indicate RITA should stop talking.)

RITA: But I just need to know that being here will have no adverse effect on my record!

JIM: You know what you can do with your precious record! Sit down.

RITA: But...

MR. SMYTHE: Let me reiterate: There is no shame in being targeted by The Reality Check Commission. We are here to further your education, to help you streamline your efforts, and we anticipate that virtually everyone will need our assistance.

MISS SMITHY: Absolutely. We project that we will meet with 95% of the school population at some point during the first semester.

MR. SMITH: Not including the faculty and staff.

MARGO: You guys are going after teachers, too?

MR. SMITH: Reality checks are not just for students.

BOB: We'll hit 'em all.

MR. SMYTHE: On the other hand, if we have advised an individual about a particular behavior, and that individual persists in it, well... actions will be taken, records will be altered. But none of that need happen, as we said, to intelligent individuals like yourselves. Speaking of such individuals, the final group to come forward...

MARGO: Um, Mr. Smythe, I think we get the idea—me, Sam, Kelly, Jenna, Niko—we get your point. We don't need to come up there.

MR. SMYTHE: Oh, but you do. Our R.C.C. research shows that public recognition of inefficient behavior helps in its secession. We insist you come forward.

NIKO: Here comes the fat club for public humiliation.

SAM: Watch out or they'll slap you with a detention or three.

MISS SMITH: What was that, Mr. Wood?

SAM: Nothing. That was the sound of silence from Mr. Wood.

(MARGO and COMPANY now stand in front.)

MR. SMYTHE: Excellent. Now, I was gratified to hear, Margo, that you felt you didn't need me to explain the reason for your group's presence here. Perhaps you would care to explain, yourself, what activity you were engaged in when I presented you with your appointment cards.

MARGO: Okay, here's the thing. None of us are big on sports, but we all thought we should get in shape. So I thought it would help if we sort of formed a club and supported each other.

KELLY: Yeah, set goals, ran together, that kind of stuff.

SAM: Wrestled boxes of jelly doughnuts out of each others' hands.

(pretending with NIKO) Don't eat it, Niko!

NIKO: I want my doughnuts! Give me my doughnuts!

MR. SMYTHE: *(warning)* Gentlemen...

SAM: That wasn't a joke. That was real.

NIKO: I like doughnuts. A lot.

MR. SMYTHE: So, Jenna, given the fact that you have been summoned by the R.C.C., what do you suppose are the chances that this club of yours would actually succeed?

(JENNA doesn't answer.)

Jenna?

(JENNA continues to be silent.)

MARGO: Jenna, remember Sam. They're quick on the detention trigger.

JENNA: I don't care. I have been sitting there, listening to all of this, and now I've been forced to stand up in front of everybody... I'm not going along with this! I know what you want me to say—that we're doomed to fail, that our fitness club is nothing but a waste of time—but I don't believe it! School isn't just about being efficient! It's not about succeeding at everything!

KENDRA: Now you're talking, Jenna!

MCKENZIE: Go for it!

JENNA: So what if you're bad at basketball and never make the NBA—at least you tried! That counts for something, right?

(The GROUP starts to get into what JENNA is saying, ad libs supporting comments. This continues throughout JENNA's speech, getting louder.)

MR. SMYTHE: That's a quaint idea, Jenna. However...

JENNA: No girlfriends, no boyfriends, just because they're probably not going to marry and produce kids? No cheerleading squad just because they're not going to win districts? Life is more than just results! No, I'm not going along with this at all! None of us should! I think this whole Reality Check Commission needs a reality check, and it goes like this—we're not going to stand for you taking away our ability to dream!

(By this time, amidst the small STUDENT revolt, the MEMBERS of the R.C.C. have exchanged glances, and MISS SMITHY has sidled over next to JENNA. MISS SMITHY pulls a syringe from her jacket and surreptitiously administers a shot into JENNA's arm.)

I say we need to... ow.

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