

TALENT-TASTIC

By Michael Soetaert

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ISBN: 1-60003-465-9

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CHARACTERS

*Flexible Cast: 24 Total; 3 Male, 9 Female, 12 Either, and 1 Mannequin
(Just change their names, if necessary)*

THE CREW

MICKIE: (female) Should look like a throwback to the '50s. Poodle skirt, hair, horn-rimmed sequined glasses.

MARTY: (male) Should be wearing high water pants, white shoes and belt, and a plaid jacket.

AUTUMN, the Stagehand: Wears total black. Hair up. Very business like.

MISS GLORIA HOOPER: (female) Drama teacher. Totally burnt out. In charge of it all. 30ish. Disheveled. Wearing a dress suit, but she just doesn't pull it off. She really hates her job.

MR. HARMON: (male) The high school principal. 40ish. Wears a conservative, three piece suit. Disproportionately overweight could be fun. Absolutely humorless.

THE CONTESTANTS

CARLA ANDERSENN: (female) Singing stupid love song. If you were wondering what to do with old prom dresses, here you go.

ANNETTE: Trained animals. Khaki shirt and pants that balloon out of jungle boots. A pith helmet and whip (optional).

LISA LEDWETTER: (female) Tap dancing. She will be wearing a square dancing style of dress. White socks, and taps. They need to be loud. You really need to be able to hear her a long way off.

ELLEN: A screaming metal guitarist. Wholly blue jeans, black band shirt, tennis shoes, bushed-out hair, lots of jewelry.

BILLIE SPRAKE: "Waiting for the Guys who were Waiting for Godot."
We're going for the artist who is not concerned with fashion look:
Black, heavily framed glasses, blue jeans, button down shirt with the

the buttons miss-matched, pocket protector with several ink pens.
You get the idea. Be creative.

CARLA: Mannequin. As much as possible, she needs to be dressed like her dummy. Find the dummy, then go from there.

BILL: Carla's dummy (just don't let Bill hear you say that). This is a real person, but if desired, a dummy could be used.

VALERY ROGERS: (female) Burlesque dancer (don't worry . . . even her grandmother would approve). Something low cut but still modest with a lot of sequins. High heels. And the feathery boa. That's a must.

AMBER CLARK: (female) The Bogart Dame. You're going for a 1930's mobster dame look here. Just watch an old Bogart movie. You'll get the dress, the accent, and the attitude.

ALESHA: Knives. A red, baggy jump suit with a long sash tied at the waist.

MARK: Alesha's assistant. A James Bond tuxedo would be perfect... or as close as you can get.

CRESTO: Magician. I'd go with a turban and a cape. Red for both would be good. Under that, I'm thinking solid black.

AMY: She is a plant in the audience I'm thinking the gum chewing New Jersey type. We're going for the early 20s look here. She has on a name badge: It should say: "Hi! I'm Amy. Ask me about soap." Ankle length dress. Chomps a lot of gum.

LAUREN: (female) Dancing Twidgit. Like all the Twidgits, she'll be wearing a frilly dress, preferably one with lots of pleats. She should also have on some sort of leggings; remember, she is doing a cancan.

LARISSA: (female) Dancing Twidgit. She'll be dressed identical to Lauren.

LURIE: (female) Dancing Twidgit. She'll be dressed identical to Larissa.

CLIFFORD: (male) Trombone player . . . more or less. The smaller the better. He really shouldn't be dressed up much at all.

ASHLEY: Comedian . . . more or less. A casual pant suit with a jacket.

JAMAL PARKER: Chef . White lab coat and a large chef's hat. Watch a few cooking shows; you'll get the idea.

OVEN: Jamal's assistant. She will first come out as a walking oven. Later she'll return in regular clothes.

NOTES ON OVEN COSTUME

A large cardboard box that has been poorly made to look like an oven. Burners, handles, what have you. You can even write the word "Oven" on the outside. There needs to be a door cut into the front that hinges down and some way to keep it closed inside the box. Duct tape would probably work. It works for everything else. This box is going to need to "walk." If you rig up a halo of sorts inside of it, it should stay in place coming and going. Don't worry, if it doesn't, it won't really matter. If you cut the top of the door a bit extra, whoever is inside should be able to see out fairly easily.

SET

Truly, it's a blank stage. Wings, back curtain, and main drapes. There is a podium with a microphone set up on the far right apron. There should be some way to get on from the Left and the Right. On the audience floor near the L stairs, there needs to be a small table with a chair. Other than that, that's it. The acts will require various tables, stools, and chairs, which are described with their props.

PROPS

(Whereas various actors will need various tables, chairs, and stools, all of which are listed below, it is quite possible that they can be shared.)

MICKIE

Note cards

MARTY

Note cards

AUTUMN

Clipboard
Broken drum

HOOPER

Watch
Note cards

HARMON

Note pad
Pen
Contract

DANCING TWIDGITS

Three copies of a tabloid
magazine (one each)

CLIFFORD

Trombone

ASHLEY

Tall stool
Microphone with stand
Glass of water

CARLA

Stool
Microphone (practical) with long
cord

ANNETTE

Stool
Large fish bowl
Several floating gold fish
(orange bobbers will work –
don't use real fish)
A large cloth that covers the
bowl
A long, thick electrical cord with
the frayed wires exposed on
one end
A flash pot

ELLEN

Small, portable amp
Long cord
Electric guitar (needs to be
practical)
Microphone and stand (need to
practical)

BILLIE

Thick, dog-eared manuscript

CARLA

Stool
Dummy (BILL)
Paper bag
Sock
Dryer sheet

VALERIE

Stool

ALESHA

Folding table

Three colourful juggling balls

Three rubber chickens

Five very large knives (they don't have to be real, but should be large)

Straight-backed chair

Ropes, chains, and padlocks

CRESTO

The Queen of Spades (the Jack would do in a pinch)

Magic wand

MARK

A gag

JAMAL

A small table

A white table cloth

A carton of eggs

A gallon or so of milk

A sack of flour

A can of motor oil (although I'd probably use honey instead of motor oil)

A very large mixing bowl

A garden trowel

A wind up timer

OVEN

A rolling cart

Several (at least eight) small, but heavily iced cakes

Do Not Copy

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Before you dim the lights, have MISS HOOPER standing on the L apron. The house lights will dim. Once EVERYBODY is settled, MISS HOOPER will continue standing there, nervously looking at her watch. AUTUMN will come out L.

AUTUMN: *(very conscious of the crowd; whispering loudly as SHE checks her clipboard)* Aren't we going?

HOOPER: *(looking once again at her watch; aggravated)* Marty and Mickie aren't here yet.

(MR. HARMON enters R on to the apron.)

MR. HARMON: *(as HE's crossing the stage)* Miss Hooper! One minute!

(AUTUMN immediately ducks back into the curtains.)

HOOPER: Yes, Principal Harmon?

HARMON: Are you about to get this little show of yours underway, Miss Hooper?

HOOPER: I was just about to do that ... until you stopped me here on stage ... in front of everybody.

HARMON: Listen, Hooper. I'm tired of your screw-ups! One more time, and you're gone. Got that?

HOOPER: But ...

HARMON: And watch your language, Hooper! No more second chances. And this time, I'm not going to hear it second-hand. That's right! I'm staying for the show!

(CLIFFORD steps through the curtains, trombone first, between MR. HARMON and MISS HOOPER. HE is oblivious to BOTH of them. HE will take one big breath and start playing, which is mostly just noise, the louder the better. HE should be awful. After a few notes both HARMON and HOOPER will grab the slide.)

HOOPER: What are you doing, Clifford?

CLIFFORD: *(short of breath; as if it should be obvious)* Playing. *(after a beat)* It was "Malaguena."

HOOPER: Isn't that supposed to be a classical guitar piece?

CLIFFORD: I adapted it. I've been practicing for a real long time. Could you tell? I started yesterday.

HOOPER: But why are you playing *now*?

CLIFFORD: (*with enthusiasm*) Because this is Talent-tastic! And I've got talent!

(*CLIFFORD takes another rip on his horn. Both HOOPER and HARMON will wince and cover their ears. When HE's going for another breath THEY will BOTH once again grab the slide.*)

HOOPER: But why are you playing *now*? The show hasn't even started yet.

CLIFFORD: I know. My mom told me to go ahead and play first so she doesn't have to sit through the other acts and that way she can get home in time to see "Who Wants to be an American Idol-ter-er."
Tonight's the semi-finals, you know.

HOOPER: No. You have to wait your turn.

CLIFFORD: But that's all I know . . . Would you like to hear it again?

HOOPER and HARMON: (*as THEY grab the slide*) No!

(*Dejected, CLIFFORD drops his head and ducks back behind the curtains.*)

HARMON: That settles it! I'm judging this little show of yours! (*HE holds up a note pad and taps it menacingly with an ink pen*) When something goes wrong, I'll be right here to see it.

HOOPER: But we don't need a judge.

HARMON: What? How can you have a talent show without a judge?

HOOPER: We were just putting the talent show on for the fun of it.

HARMON: The fun of it? What kind of nonsense is that? How will you know who's won?

HOOPER: Everybody wins . . .

HARMON: Everybody? What kind of crazy talk is that? Why, unless there's a winner, what's the point? It's . . . it's un-American, that's what it is!

(*The DANCING TWIDGITS come out on stage through the center curtains. THEY are very excited.*)

LAUREN: Did you hear that!

LARISSA: There's going to be winners!

LAURIE: And prizes!

LAUREN: We could win money!

LAURIE: Lots of money!

LARISSA: Maybe even a thousand dollars!

ALL THE TWIDGITS: A thousand dollars!

(With excited squeals THEY all duck back into the curtains.)

HARMON: Well, there's another fine mess you've gotten yourself into.

You've done blown your entire budget for the next four years on one silly little show. Of course, I'm willing to bet that you won't be here for even one more year. Now get on with the show!

(HARMON will make his way off stage and sit behind a small table that is set up on the floor to the Left. After a beat, AUTUMN will come out.)

AUTUMN: I heard Mr. Harmon. I'm so sorry.

HOOPER: What do you mean? This is great! If I get fired, I never have to do this again! *(dreaming)* No papers to grade. No meetings to attend. No conferences. No lessons to plan. No lessons! *(happily)* Let's have us a show! *(SHE will cross R. to the podium; after tapping the microphone; talking into it; feedback would be fun)*
Lights, please.

(The entire house lights will come up.)

(not excited in the least) Just a spot on me will be nice.

(A spot comes on, but the rest of the lights stay on, too.)

You can turn off the rest of the lights now.

(Everything goes off.)

... but keep the spot on ...

(The spot comes on, but it's to her left. SHE tries to move toward it, but it moves too. Have some fun. Eventually – don't play it too long – HOOPER, with only the slightest look of disgust, will move back to the podium and try to begin with what little light SHE has.)

Thank you. Good evening, I'm Miss Hoo... *(the sound goes off; after a beat, projecting to the entire house without the microphone)*

Before we begin tonight's show I'd like to remind those students working behind the scenes that this is a graded assignment.

(The sound immediately comes back up and the spotlight centers on her behind the podium.)

(not really thankful) Thank you.

(HOOPER's opening monologue should be read with limited enthusiasm. SHE is obviously reading off of cue cards. SHE should not look up very often, if at all.)

Good evening, I'm Miss Hooper, head of the Roosevelt High School Drama Department. The hosts of tonight's show, Marty and Mickie, apparently have no concept of time. But, as they say, "The show must go on." *(beat)* Although I have no idea why. *(SHE shuffles her note cards; after a beat)* Welcome to the Annual Spring Talent Show – Talent-tastic – a name that predates my tenure and can therefore never be changed. This is the Drama Department's final show of the year, and hopefully, the last I will have to do... ever! *(after a beat)* Our first act this evening is something called The Dancing Twidgits. *(reaching an all time low with her enthusiasm)* Please give a warm Roosevelt High welcome to the Dancing Twidgits.

(When the curtains open the stage is empty for a beat, then LAUREN, LARISSA, and LAURIE – in that order, enter from R as a cancan line. THEY will try, poorly, to do the old leg kick as THEY cross to C. When THEY get there, THEY will stop and begin kicking and singing – more or less to the tune of "Yankee Doodle Dandy.")

LARISSA: I, I want a thousand dollars,
A thousand dollars just for me.
And if I had a thousand dollars,
Just imagine how happy I would be.

LAUREN and LAURIE: We, we want a thousand dollars.
A thousand dollars one and all.
So if you need a thousand dollars,
You would know who to call.

LARISSA: I, I want a thousand dollars,
A thousand dollars will be there.
And when I have my thousand dollars
I'll be darned if I'm going to share.

(LAUREN and LAURIE will immediately drop her.)

LAUREN and LAURIE: What?

LARISSA: What do you mean "What?"

LAUREN: Those aren't the words!

LARISSA: What words?

LAURIE: The words we wrote!

LARISSA: What words we wrote?

LAURIE: The third stanza!

LAUREN: It was supposed to go ...

(LAUREN hums to get pitch, then both LAUREN and LAURIE sing.)

LAUREN and LAURIE: We, we want a thousand dollars ...

LAURIE: *(breaking loose)* A thousand dollars just for me!

LAUREN: What?!

LAURIE: Sorry. I was adlibbing.

LAUREN: No, you weren't! Now, both of you! Get off the stage!

(With heads hung, both LARISSA and LAURIE exit R.)

LAUREN: *(when finally alone; softly at first, but building in volume – a lot of volume)*

I, I want a thousand dollars.

A thousand dollars would be swell.

And if you think I'll share my thousand dollars,

Then you can all go straight to ...

MISS HOOPER: *(cutting her off as SHE steps out on R)* Thank you, Lauren!

(LARISSA and LAURIE coming running back out and join LAUREN. LAURIE needs to be in the middle. The THREE cross over and stand in front of MR. HARMON. THEY are all giddy, showing no signs whatsoever of having just turned on each other. THEY will stand there nervously for a beat... maybe two... waiting for MR. HARMON, who is writing with his head down, to look up and finally notice them. When HE does, THEY will all giggle.)

HARMON: *(after a beat)* Yes?

LARISSA: *(finally)* Aren't you going to critique us?

HARMON: Excuse me?

LAURIE: You know ...

LAUREN: ... like you do on TV?

LAURIE: You're not the mean one, are you?

HARMON: *(totally confused)* The mean *what*?

LAURIE: The mean judge.

LARISSA: I was hoping the girl judge would've been here, too.

LAUREN: She's so nice.

LARISSA: But you're nice, too.

LAURIE: *(under her breath, to LARISSA)* Suck up.

(LAURIE elbows LARISSA, and then LARISSA shoves her back into LAUREN, who then shoves her back into LAURIE; a few times would be fun.)

LAUREN: Stop it!

(THEY all stop and then face HARMON and nervously giggle.)

HARMON: I'm sorry, but I have no idea what you're talking about.

LARISSA: Didn't Miss Hooper say you were from the TV show?

HARMON: What show?

LAUREN: You know, "Who Wants to be an American Idol-ter-er?"

HARMON: No! I'm your principal.

(THEY're all visibly crestfallen.)

LAURIE: Then you can't make us rich and famous?

HARMON: *(only the slightest bit condescending)* Trust me. If it were in my power, I would do it. *(after a beat, noticing THEY're not leaving)* Would that make you go away?

(THEY all joyously nod "Yes.")

Whatever.

(THEY all squeal with delight.)

LARISSA: We're going to be rich!

LAUREN: And famous!

(The THREE hook up in a cancan and dance their way off right.)

ALL THREE: *(singing as THEY exit)*

We, we're gonna be on TV,

Stars of the silver screen.

And when we're all on the TV,

LAUREN: Gee, Wally, wouldn't that be keen!

(The curtain closes and after a beat MISS HOOPER enters R. When SHE's almost to the microphone, MARTY and MICKIE will emerge from L. As THEY cross ...)

MICKIE: *(perky)* We're here!

MARTY: *(looking out at the audience; perky as well)* Are we late?

MISS HOOPER: *(sarcastically)* What do you think?

(MARTY and MICKIE look at each other puzzled.)

MARTY: We thought the show started at 7:15.

MICKIE: Or 7:25.

MARTY: Or maybe 7:36.

MICKIE: We actually thought we were early.

MARTY: We thought you would wait.

MISS HOOPER: Why would a show ever start at 7:36?

MARTY: You know, I said the very same thing to Mickie.

MICKIE: No, you didn't!

MARTY: Well, I was going to.

MISS HOOPER: *(while crossing left, where SHE will exit)* Oh, just get on with the show.

MARTY: Welcome to talent night at Roosevelt High School!

MICKIE: I'm Mickie!

MARTY: And I'm Marty!

MICKIE: It's our talent extravaganza!

MARTY: It's our talent super-nan-za!

MICKIE: *(turning on MARTY; dropping out of character; trying to be restrained, but obviously angry)* It's not super-nan-za. We didn't practice it that way. It's su-pran-za.

MARTY: *(turning on MICKIE; also dropping out of character; also trying to be restrained, but obviously put out)* What difference does it make?

MICKIE: We've already discussed this!

(BOTH immediately become aware that THEY're still on stage, turn toward the audience, and instantly get back in their perky, smiling characters. THEY will do this a lot.)

Hey, Marty, tell them what they'll win if they win.

MARTY: *(smiling, but not reading his cue cards)* Why don't you, Mickie, I'm sure you'd pronounce it better.

MISS HOOPER: *(stepping out from L)* They already know!

MICKIE: *(after a beat)* Oh.

MARTY: *(reading his cards)* And now, it's time for our intermission!

(MICKIE immediately turns and grabs MARTY's cue cards, thumbs through them, and swaps several cards to the top; SHE will then turn back and smile.)

MARTY: *(returning to his note card)* And what talent we have this evening! *(to MICKIE)* Right?

MICKIE: Right.

(Back to their note cards.)

So are you ready, Marty?

MARTY: I'm ready, Mickie!

MICKIE: Then let's give the crowd what they want!

MARTY: *(puzzled)* We're going to let them go home?

MICKIE: *(ignoring MARTY)* Our first contestant for tonight is ...

BOTH: The Dancing Twidgits!

(The curtain opens and the DANCING TWIDGITS enter R doing their cancan. As soon as MISS HOOPER sees THEY're back, SHE will take off toward them. When THEY see her, THEY will head back from whence THEY came, never stopping singing or dancing until THEY're off stage and have finished the song, hopefully at the same time.)

ALL THREE: We, we want to live in mansions,
Ride in big long fancy cars.
Our pictures will be in all the tabloids...

(ALL hold up copies of the American Enquirer.)

Look, ma, there we are!

(When the DANCING TWIDGITS are off, MISS HOOPER will stand on stage fuming for a beat.)

MISS HOOPER: *(to MARTY and MICKIE)* We already did them, you twidgits!

THE DANCING TWIDGITS: *(starting up from off stage)* We ...

MISS HOOPER: *(pointing toward them)* Don't you dare!

(THEY're immediately quiet. As MISS HOOPER is walking across the stage, have the curtain chase her, more or less.)

(turning toward the curtain person, which is always to be assumed offstage DR) Don't you dare, either!

(When MISS HOOPER exits L, the curtain will finish closing. The whole while, MICKIE and MARTY are frantically looking through their note cards. THEY've been quietly, tersely talking to each other.)

MARTY: (to MICKIE) I don't know!

MICKIE: (to MARTY) Well where is it?

(THEY both look up and notice THEY're in the spotlight; embarrassed; trying to cover.)

MARTY: Um ... And now, here's something we're sure you'll all enjoy ...

(HE points to the curtain as it opens. The stage lights come up, and MARTY and MICKIE disappear off R. CRESTO will stride to the DC edge of the stage and immediately point at someone in the audience. If you have extras and you don't know what to do with them, THEY can play the following audience members, but the tricks are designed to work no matter who CRESTO calls on. If you're playing with actual audience members, CRESTO will have to know how to wing it in case somebody doesn't cooperate. Me? I'd just move to somebody else, and if it totally bombs, go right to AMY.)

CRESTO: (pointing) You, sir! You.

(HE waits for the PERSON to acknowledge him.)

Yes, you. Check in your right rear pants pocket. *(waits for him to do so)* Do you find the Queen of Spades?

AUDIENCE MEMBER #1: Ahh ... no? *(or some other negative response)*

CRESTO: Of course not. Because *I* have the Queen of Spades.

(HE takes the Queen of Spades from a pocket and, with a flourish, shows it to the audience; HE takes a short bow. After which, HE strides over to DR. The following needs to flow quickly. Pointing at somebody in the back. It doesn't need be specific.)

You, ma'am. I'm sensing happiness. You know somebody who has had a baby. Somebody that is close to you. Perhaps ... a relative.

(Turning quickly. Pointing at somebody's mother.)

You, ma'am. Stand please! *(SHE may need to be coaxed a bit; when SHE's finally standing)* I'm sensing ... embarrassment.

(Turning quickly. Pointing at somebody non-specific.)

You, sir! Your mother was present when you were born. Am I right, sir?

(HE will mock the nod of the AUDIENCE MEMBER, whether HE gets it from anyone anywhere. Turning quickly, pointing at somebody on the front row. Suddenly coming to a stop as HE looks at her intently.)

You ... Ma'am ... Your secret's safe with me.

(HE then quickly turns and points at AMY in the audience.)

You, ma'am.

(AMY, when pointed out, will stand with a giggle. SHE will point at herself and mouth, "Me?")

Yes, you. Would you like to be my volunteer?

AMY: Oh! Me? How exciting!

CRESTO: Then come right up here on this stage!

(AMY makes her way to the stage.)

(when SHE finally gets there) What's your name, Amy?

AMY: Why ... it's Amy! How did you know that?

CRESTO: That's why I'm not just Cresto. I am the *Amazing* Cresto!

(CRESTO holds out his fist – you know, as if HE has something inside of it that HE doesn't want AMY to see. AMY pulls back with an embarrassed giggle.)

OK, Amy. I have a common object in my hand. It's an object that you might use every day. Amy ... do you know what that object is?

AMY: *(hesitant)* No ...?

CRESTO: Of course you don't! *(to the audience)* Isn't she amazing, ladies and gentlemen!

(CRESTO turns back to AMY and holds his hand back out. AMY is starting to be a bit suspicious.)

And what about that object, Amy? *(with a flourish)* Cresto Presto! It's gone! He holds open an empty hand)

AMY: *(starting to smell a rat's gym socks)* Hey ...

CRESTO: *(totally ignoring her suspicions)* OK, Amy. Now I'm going to read your mind. Concentrate, Amy! Concentrate! *(after a beat; chopply)* You're thinking that I don't have a clue what I'm doing here. *(back to old voice)* Am I right?

AMY: *(reluctant)* Well ... yeah ...

CRESTO: *(takes a quick bow and then quickly ushering AMY off the stage)* OK everybody! Give it up for Amy! Wasn't she fantastic!

(AMY will return to her seat, looking like SHE's just been manipulated, although SHE doesn't quite know how. CRESTO will move to center stage. Dim the lights and bring him up in a soft spot.)

OK, now Ladies and Gentlemen, for my final act of the evening, I will need the total cooperation of everyone in the audience – male and female, young and old. Should anyone in the audience fail to fully cooperate, then the consequences could be disastrous ... *(softly)* ... for me. For I, in tonight's grand finale, shall make myself disappear. *(startlingly loud)* I demand total silence! Now. Place both feet flat on the floor. Quietly! Now, place your hands on your knees... with your palms up! Faces forward! Now ... everybody ... close your eyes!

(After only the slightest pause, CRESTO's off. Once HE's clear, bring the main lights back up. MICKIE and MARTY will enter from right as the curtains close.)

MICKIE: And wasn't that amazing!

MARTY: *(as the curtains open)* Umm ... and now, dancing her way into your hearts ...

(LISA LEDWETTER is standing in the middle of the stage ready to go. Before the curtains get all the way open, the DANCING TWIDGITS will enter R and dance across the stage, chasing LISA off.)

DANCING TWIDGITS: We, we want to hit the big times.

We'll be known to all and one.

We'll all trip the light fantastic.

It's either that or be a nun!

(THEY keep dancing right off left.)

MISS HOOPER: *(even though THEY're pretty much gone)* You've had your turn!

LISA: *(who enters L, her taps tapping along)* No I haven't.

MISS HOOPER: Oh.

LISA: Can I go ahead and go now?

MISS HOOPER: We'll have to work you in later. We need to stay on schedule.

LISA: But I was going to tap dance "Stars and Stripes Forever."

MISS HOOPER: I know.

LISA: Oh.

(With head down, LISA exits left, loudly clapping her taps. MISS HOOPER returns to her spot as the curtains close.)

MICKIE: And now ... *(SHE slides the top note card off and looks with puzzlement at the next card, and then the next. SHE'll check a few backs. After an awkward moment ...)* And now, something else.

(When the curtain opens, CARLA is DC sitting on a stool with BILL, her mannequin, on her knee.)

CARLA: Hi! I'm Carla, and this is Bill. Say hello, Bill.

BILL: *(poorly)* Hello.

CARLA: Say, Bill, do you know why they don't name mannequins Charles?

BILL: No, Carla.

CARLA: *(barely able to wait for the punch line before SHE laughs)*
Because then you'd be a woodchuck!

(BILL needs quickly to snap his head and look at CARLA with his mouth slightly open. What you're going for is a look of shocked surprise, as if the joke were totally inappropriate and HE can't believe SHE would say such a thing. Can you blame him?)

You get it? *(trying not to laugh)* Of course not! It's because you're a dummy!

(BILL will snap his mouth shut and turn his back on CARLA. SHE's too busy laughing at her own joke to notice right away.)

Knock! Knock!

(SHE waits for BILL, but HE remains steadfast.)

(after a beat, beginning to sense that something might be wrong; not quite so sure of herself) Knock? Knock?

(SHE waits for BILL, becoming increasingly nervous.)

(after a beat) You're supposed to say, "Who's there..."

(Still nothing.)

(after a beat, trying to fake it – poorly) Knock ! Knock! *(pause)*
Who's there? *(SHE waits to no avail)* Woody! *(beat)* Woody who?
(beat; trying to force a laugh) Woody Woodpecker! You'd better
watch out! *(nervously looks around; SHE is now very uncomfortable)*
Well, Bill, aren't you going to say anything to the crowd?

(If possible, BILL will turn his back on CARLA even more.)

(after a beat) Look, Bill, I know I promised that I wouldn't use those
jokes anymore, but I don't have any new material. *(beat; becoming*
angry) Well, it's not like you ever helped me come up with any good
jokes! You just sit there watching TV while I have to do all the work.
(beat) Fine! Two can play at this game! *(CARLA turns her back on*
BILL) Hummpff!

(THEY will sit on stage saying nothing to each other for a few awkward
moments until finally MARTY and MICKIE come out. As the curtain
closes ...)

MARTY: *(humoring the insane)* Wasn't that wonderful, folks!

MICKIE: And now the dancing improvisations of Valerie Rogers!

(MICKIE and MARTY exit R as the curtains open. VALERIE, dressed all
in sequins with a big feathery boa around her neck is standing center
stage. The lights immediately drop and the classic burlesque music will
loudly begin. Flood the stage with red light and start the spotlights
(hopefully you have more than one) tightly zigzagging crazily across the
stage. VALERIE will start to strut awkwardly in her high heels down
stage with the music, swinging her boa as SHE goes. MISS HOOPER,
in a panic, will run out on the stage and grab her.)

MISS HOOPER: Stop that! *(to the LIGHTING CREW)* Stop that!

(The music stops and all but one of the spotlights goes off. MRS.
HOOPER takes a step toward the spot and it moves. SHE moves in that
direction, but it moves again.)

I'm warning you. I know where the fuse box is!

(The spot immediately goes out and the regular lights come back up.)

VALERIE: What about my routine?

MISS HOOPER: You can't do that! This is a family show!

VALERIE: I wasn't really going to.

MISS HOOPER: I don't care! You can't even pretend!

VALERIE: Don't I get to perform at all?

MISS HOOPER: *(as SHE's shooin' her off stage L)* No!

VALERIE: *(as SHE's leaving)* That's not fair!

(LISA LEDWETTER will run out on stage just as the curtain is closing, but not get a chance to even say anything. MARTY and MICKIE will enter R.)

MARTY: Boy! When was the last time we had this much fun!

MICKIE: *(still smiling toward the audience)* You're an idiot, Marty. *(after a beat)* And now... I haven't a clue.

(When the curtain opens, ANNETTE is DL looking as much an animal trainer as possible – all the way down to the whip and the pith helmet. There is a stool Center, and not to ruin the surprise, but ... there is a large goldfish bowl that is covered with a cloth on the stool.)

ANNETTE: *(like a circus barker)* Ladies and Gentlemen. Young and old alike. Tonight I bring to you the most amazing demonstration of precisely trained animals on the face of the earth. Yes, others have trained dogs and cats, elephants and chimpanzees. We've all seen stallions and seals. I have even witnessed practiced parakeets, and yaks yakkity yak. Yet, I say to you, what I offer you this evening is more amazing than all of that combined. Yes, combined! Ladies and Gentlemen, without any further ado or delay, I give to you ... *(as SHE is removing the cloth over the goldfish bowl with a flourish)* ... Synchronized Goldfish!

(A "Ta-Taa!" would be nice. SHE will bow, not noticing that all of the goldfish are floating at the top. If you can't find plastic fish, you can use orange fishing bobbers. From a distance, who can tell?)

(noticing that they're all "dead;" in terror) Auggghh! They're dead. *(while shaking the bowl)* Wake up! Wake up! We would've won! Comon! Only one more time! Auggghh!

(The curtain starts to close. SHE will run up and grab it, but still let it close.)

No! Wait! They really could. It wasn't a trick. It was for real. They really were trained! *(to the goldfish)* How could you do this to me?! No-o-o-o!

(SHE disappears behind the screen. As MARTY and MICKIE come back out.)

MARTY: *(reading his note card)* Boy, wasn't that great.

ANNETTE: *(screaming from behind the curtain)* Great! You think that was great!

(ANNETTE comes through the middle of the curtain with murder in her eyes. MARTY screams, throws his cards in the air, and runs through the auditorium and out the side door with ANNETTE hot on his heels, so to speak.)

MICKIE: *(looks around nervously; reading her note cards)* So, Marty, what's next? *(SHE waits a nervous beat and then looks at the next note card; with alarm, SHE realizes she doesn't have that card. After a beat; totally flustered)* Oh! Open the stupid curtains!

(SHE rushes off R. When the curtains open, ELLEN, looking as rough as SHE possibly can get, will be UL standing next to her amp. Her guitar will be slung down low. The microphone stand will be UR. Once the curtains open, after an appropriate snarl, SHE will wang a cord on her guitar, but no sound will come out of the amp.)

ELLEN: *(politely)* Oh ... sorry.

(ELLEN will turn up her amp, get her stance, and then, very animated, wang two or three times on a horribly out-of-tune guitar. The louder the better. Then, without playing SHE will walk toward the microphone, but the amp cord won't be long enough, and it will bounce her back a few times before SHE realizes SHE needs to go back and drag the amp forward. Then SHE'll still have to reach for the microphone stand and only be able to sing into it by tilting both herself and the amp.)

(screaming; being coherent is not the point)

You said that you love me,
But how can that be true,
When you won't even get
A his and her tattoo?

Oh! Yeah!

You said that you'd love me
Through all time and space,
But how can I believe you,

If you won't pierce your face?

(SHE finishes up with another scream and then steps back and wangs on the guitar once more, after which SHE will almost instantly return to being quite passive. SHE'll walk back up to the microphone, but of course, SHE'll have to stretch again.)

Umm ... Yeah ... That's all I got ... but you can tell it really rocks.
(SHE screams and gives a rock salute with her raised hand, which SHE'll have to check to make sure it's right – it won't be; screaming)
Rock and Roll!

(ELLEN immediately goes back to being passive as the curtains close. MARTY and MICKIE both enter left. MARTY's hair and clothes are all askew, as if HE's just had the feathers knocked out of him. MARTY will quickly be picking up his cue cards. If you really want to use cue cards to read off of, HE can have the ones HE's going to use already in his hands and just put the ones HE picks up on the bottom. Ain't it great when you don't need to memorize lines?)

MICKIE: And now, all the way from C hall ...

MARTY: *(still sorting out his cards; totally unaware of what HE's reading)* ... with the finest pepper steak in all of Hawgwaller County!

MICKIE: What?

(MARTY shrugs and motions to his cards. MICKIE quickly grabs them and does a quick rearrange.)

MARTY: *(still totally unaware of what HE's reading)* So drop on by today and tell 'em Hiram sent you!

MICKIE: What?

(MICKIE grabs MARTY's cards again as the curtains start to open.)
(to whom SHE thinks is AUTUMN) Not yet!

(The curtains continue to open.)

MARTY: Not yet?

MICKIE: *(flustered – it's a word)* I wasn't talking to you!

(As the curtains finish opening it's obvious that it's VALERIE who's been opening them. SHE still has her boa and sequins. SHE finishes opening the curtain and then runs to the stool that is in Center and hops on it.)

VALERIE: *(trying to act like SHE's not out of breath)* Let me... entertain you. *(SHE will cough)*

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