

THE BLOODY ATTACK OF THE EVIL, DEMONIC GIRAFFE PUPPET

A FULL-LENGTH COMEDY

By Bradley Walton

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CHARACTERS

16 roles: 3 males, 5 females, 8 either

RUPERT NEWELL (M) – A good-hearted teenager who sees his new camcorder as a force to improve 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, she 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 into the film as a punishment.

ALICE MASON (M) – An imposing, scary 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.

PHOEBE BRODY (F) – Quite possibly the laziest teenager in the world.

MRS. / MR. ZIMMERMAN (M or F) – The school library secretary.

MAYHEW (M or F) – A professional film editor with a really thick Southern accent.

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

With doubling, the play can easily be performed with ten actors (3 males, 6 females, 1 either).

If necessary, the actors in the roles of VIRGINIA, JACK, ALICE, TIANA, PHOEBE, and ZIMMERMAN can easily double as LUCAS, WILLIAMS, WEBBER and the three JUDGES.

Other combinations are certainly possible, such as ZIMMERMAN/MAYHEW and ZIMMERMAN/PATTINSON. The director is welcome to fill the roles in whatever way best suits his or her production, but should keep in mind the need to keep characters' appearances distinct during their close-ups in the movie.

FILM CAST

Characters from the play and their roles in the film.

RUPERT – David

CLIFF – Voice of The Puppet(s) / Sally / Leprechaun Prime Minister

TIANA – Catherine / Great Spiritual Old Guy

JACK – Bob / Man #1 / various leprechauns

ALICE – Detective Portman / Man #2 / various leprechauns

VIRGINIA – Detective Jones

PATTINSON – him/herself

ZIMMERMAN – him/herself

MAYHEW – him/herself

PHOEBE – herself

LUCAS, MATILDA, and WEBBER – annoyed library patrons. (Omit library patrons from movie if the actors are doubling in other roles.)

JUDGES 1, 2, and 3 – library ninjas

ALL PLAY CAST MEMBERS – assembled leprechauns at the war council

There is an optional cameo for a parent of the actor playing RUPERT. There are cameos for two or three people not acting in the play (ideally teachers or administrators if the play is being performed by a high school).

SPECIAL NEEDS

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

SETTING

A medium-sized American town, late autumn.

Ideally, the play occurs in the “present” year. However, if the technology referenced in the play (digital camcorders and unspecified computer editing software) eventually becomes dated and a year needs to be established, then the play occurs in 2005.

STAGING

Staging is simple. The major set pieces (mostly tables and chairs) are items that can easily be found around most high schools and homes. No set construction is necessary.

Set diagrams, 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 this document.

ACT I

Scene 1: The film contest – apron, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, LUCAS, MATILDA, WEBBER, PATTINSON, 3 JUDGES

Scene 2: The cafeteria, two and a half weeks earlier – stage left: RUPERT, CLIFF, VIRGINIA, JACK

Scene 3: The school library, later that day – apron DR, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, ZIMMERMAN

Scene 4: Walking home from school, that afternoon – apron, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, CLIFF

Scene 5: The cafeteria after school, a few days later – stage left: RUPERT, CLIFF, PHOEBE, TIANA, VIRGINIA, JACK

Scene 6: Rupert's home, the following Sunday – stage right: RUPERT, CLIFF, ALICE

Scene 7: The cafeteria, after school the next day – stage left: RUPERT, CLIFF, ALICE, PHOEBE, TIANA, VIRGINIA, JACK

ACT II

Scene 1: Rupert's back yard, a few days later – apron, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, CLIFF, PHOEBE, TIANA, VIRGINIA, ALICE, JACK

Scene 2: The office of Margery Pattinson, the next day – stage right: RUPERT, PATTINSON

Scene 3: A school hallway, the next day – down center: RUPERT, CLIFF

Scene 4: Mayhew's Pro Video, that evening – stage left: RUPERT, MAYHEW

Scene 5: A school hallway, the next morning – apron DR, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, CLIFF, PHOEBE, TIANA

Scene 6: Rupert's back yard, that weekend – apron, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, CLIFF, PHOEBE, TIANA, VIRGINIA, ALICE, JACK

Scene 7: Mayhew's Pro Video, the day before the film contest – stage left: RUPERT, MAYHEW

Scene 8: Back to the film contest – apron, in front of closed curtain: RUPERT, LUCAS, MATILDA, WEBBER, PATTINSON, 3 JUDGES, CLIFF

NOTE: Only those portions of the stage that are being used in a scene should be lit.

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Bloody Attack of the Evil, Demonic Giraffe Puppet was originally performed April 28 and 29, 2006, at Harrisonburg High School in Harrisonburg, Virginia. It was produced by Stanley Swartz, directed by Bradley Walton, and stage managed by Krystle Henninger, with the following cast:

Rupert Newell – TIM WIGGINS
Cliff Spall – CAMILA DOMONOSKE
Alice Mason – AARON HENDERSON
Virginia Phelps – KATIE HORNE
Jack Felton – SEAN LANDIS
Tiana Buckle – ANNA-LEE CRAIG
Phoebe Brody – SARA DAVIS
Holly Rosson – CASSIE COLEMAN
Mrs. Zimmerman – SARA ROZMUS
Mayhew – WILLIAM KLEMT
Margery Pattinson – RACHEL DOWNEY
Joshua Lucas – CORY LAWRENCE
Matilda Williams – SANDY HERNANDEZ
David Webber – JOSH MITRI
Judge #1 – ZACH FICHTER
Judge #2 – KATE HALLING
Judge #3 – JORDON HENDERSON

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ACT I

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 the center of the stage, and address the audience.)

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PATTINSON: And that was *The Children of Tomorrow*, a film by Joshua Lucas. Let's have a round of applause for Joshua.

(JOSHUA stands and takes a little bow.)

PATTINSON: That was 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: **(raising his hand)** Um, excuse me, ma'am?

PATTINSON: **(slightly annoyed)** Yes, Rupert? Is there anything you'd like to tell us about your film before we begin?

RUPERT: **(stands)** Well, uh, the title changed a little bit after I submitted my entry form. The project kind of evolved while I was working on it, and the title kind of evolved, too. The movie is still about materialism and the decay of morality in postmodern society, kind of—just under a different name.

PATTINSON: **(more annoyed)** Well, we can certainly understand how these things can take on lives of their own, and that's fine. But you would have been welcome to inform us of the change in title before now.

RUPERT: I'm really sorry about that, ma'am. I got so caught up in working on the movie that I forgot to tell you that the title changed. It's completely my fault, and I'm really sorry.

PATTINSON: Hmm. Next time, please be sure to let us know if there are any changes to your entry at least a week before the contest, all right?

RUPERT: Absolutely. Thank you, ma'am.

PATTINSON: **(to audience)** Ladies and Gentlemen, I present to you Rupert Newell's film, 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. Any lights in use BLACKOUT. All actors carry their chairs

from the stage. (One of the contestants removes RUPERT's chair, as HE has a fast costume change.) The screen is raised or carried offstage, and the curtain opens.)

SCENE 2: THE CAFETERIA, SEVERAL WEEKS EARLIER

AT RISE: Lights come up on RUPERT sitting at a cafeteria table at L. There are five chairs at the table. 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 from L. 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.

CLIFF: So?

RUPERT: So. . .

CLIFF: So, did you get it?

RUPERT: Get what?

CLIFF: You got it. I can tell.

RUPERT: *(starting to smile)* Got what?

CLIFF: The digital camcorder you've been begging for for like—forever.

Did your parents finally cave in and get you one for your birthday?

RUPERT: *(grinning)* Yup.

CLIFF: Oh, wow. You are so lucky. Do you know what this means?

RUPERT: It means I can preserve important moments. Create art. Make a statement about something.

CLIFF: You are so boring. Have some fun. Let's make a slasher movie!

RUPERT: Cliff, the camcorder isn't some toy. I can do a lot with it. Important stuff. Good stuff. It's media. Media has power. With power comes responsibility.

CLIFF: Rupert. You are not Uncle Ben.

(VIRGINIA enters from L. 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 logo or slogan. SHE carries a bookbag.)

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VIRGINIA: What are you eating, today?

CLIFF: Live puppies.

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

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.

CLIFF: Well, she should. What was it we were arguing about?

RUPERT: You said I wasn't Uncle Ben.

CLIFF: That's right. You're not.

RUPERT: Cliff, the camcorder is a tool.

CLIFF: It's a tool we can use to make a slasher movie!

RUPERT: I don't want to waste videotape making crude movies!

CLIFF: Geoffrey Chaucer did crude and did it well. It's as high an art form as whatever self-important nonsense Ken Burns crapped out on PBS last week. People just don't like to admit it.

RUPERT: Chaucer didn't write slasher stories.

CLIFF: No, but *The Miller's Tale* still rocks. Come on, let's get it out of our systems and then you can make a real movie.

RUPERT: It's not in my system! Our society is nothing but bread and circuses! I don't want to be part of that!

CLIFF: Bread and circuses died with the Romans. This is the age of pizza and video games.

RUPERT: I want to make a serious film. You know, something with a point. Something people will remember me for.

(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.

CLIFF: Why?

JACK: 'Cause I need one.

CLIFF: **(stands)** You need humility and an attitude adjustment.

RUPERT: Cliff. Please don't.

JACK: I need a dollar.

CLIFF: Jack, if I were to search your wallet right now, I'm betting I'd find a dollar.

JACK: Yeah. You would. I just don't see any reason to spend it on a Coke when I can spend one of yours, instead.

RUPERT: **(giving JACK a dollar)** Fine. Here. Go away.

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

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CLIFF: We have no respect for you.

JACK: You better watch it, or I'll teach you respect.

CLIFF: Don't you even care why? Or are you too stupid to even think to ask?

JACK: You're dead meat. You know that? All right. Why?

CLIFF: You have no real brain to speak of, but you're the best football player the school's got, so they fudge your grades to keep you from flunking and they fudge your disciplinary record to keep you from getting suspended before a game. Well, good for you. You can play football. But no matter how good you are, all you'll ever be is a football player. Even if you go pro, no matter how much money you make, no matter how much people think they love you, you'll never be anything more than somebody who runs around with a *ball*, and my neighbor's dog can do that!

JACK: You. . .

CLIFF: Maybe it's a good paycheck if you can get it, but I'd just as soon do something that's actually worthwhile to make a living.

(JACK pushes CLIFF.)

RUPERT: ***(moving between them)*** She didn't mean that!

JACK: Shut up!

(JACK shoves RUPERT aside and is reaching for CLIFF as we BLACKOUT. The curtain closes, and a library book cart and wastebasket are brought on DR for the next scene.)

SCENE 3: THE SCHOOL LIBRARY, LATER THAT DAY

AT RISE: DR on the apron, MR./MRS. ZIMMERMAN is arranging books on the book cart. There is a small wastebasket nearby. ZIMMERMAN is a school library secretary in his/her 30s. If male, HE wears a tie-dyed shirt with a black sweater, school I.D. badge, black pants, and black shoes. If female, SHE wears a tie-dyed dress, black sweater, school I.D. badge, and black shoes. RUPERT, carrying his bookbag, approaches ZIMMERMAN.

RUPERT: Excuse me, Mrs. Zimmerman?

ZIMMERMAN: Good afternoon, Roger.

RUPERT: Rupert.

ZIMMERMAN: I'm surprised you're here. Weren't you in a fight today?

RUPERT: How can you not know my name, but know about that?

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ZIMMERMAN: We have over a thousand kids in this school. Don't expect me to keep track of you all.

RUPERT: Um, I don't. And it really wasn't a fight. More like shoving. Some teachers broke it up before it went any further.

ZIMMERMAN: You shouldn't fight, you know.

RUPERT: I wasn't fighting. I was trying to break it up.

ZIMMERMAN: Don't argue. So what do you want?

RUPERT: I got a camcorder for my birthday and I'm looking for something I can make a movie about. Do you have any ideas for a good documentary subject?

ZIMMERMAN: Geez, kid, what do I look like? A muse?

RUPERT: But you're like, a librarian. You're supposed to be this wellspring of endless knowledge.

ZIMMERMAN: I'm the library secretary. Which is kind of a misnomer, because I don't do anything remotely secretarial. I do whatever needs to be done. But nowhere in my job description does it say that I have to know squat about anything. You pile up an overdue fine and I'll be happy to take your money. You got a printer jam—well, that's outside my job description, too, but I'll probably be able to fix it, because I know a lot more than they expect me to know. But you shouldn't *expect* me to know *anything*—that's just not my job.

RUPERT: Is there an actual librarian around?

ZIMMERMAN: She doesn't have time to talk to you.

RUPERT: Sorry I asked.

ZIMMERMAN: (**exasperated**) What kind of movie did you want to make?

RUPERT: I don't know. Something important.

ZIMMERMAN: Are you looking to expose the evils of society, or inform people about something?

RUPERT: I just don't know.

ZIMMERMAN: Do you know how to edit a movie?

RUPERT: No.

ZIMMERMAN: Do you own software to edit a movie?

RUPERT: Yeah. It came with my camcorder, but my computer's an old piece of junk and won't run it.

ZIMMERMAN: Do you even know how to work your camcorder?

RUPERT: Not yet.

ZIMMERMAN: And students wonder why we get grumpy. You know we have camcorders here that students can use.

RUPERT: Yeah.

ZIMMERMAN: And I know you've never checked one out.

RUPERT: No.

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ZIMMERMAN: All dreams and no planning. You've had a lot time to lay the groundwork for this masterpiece you're undertaking. You can't just jump into this and expect to wind up with anything worthwhile.

RUPERT: I was figuring sink or swim.

ZIMMERMAN: I don't want to be the one to tell you that you can't do something, because we're supposed to encourage students, but I think you're going to sink. How come you've never checked out a camcorder?

RUPERT: I didn't want to bother you.

ZIMMERMAN: We're here to be bothered. Use our expertise to save yourself some grief.

RUPERT: But you don't have any expertise.

ZIMMERMAN: Look, Richard. You're a nice kid, but if you're disrespectful, I will write you up.

RUPERT: I'm sorry. I wasn't trying to be disrespectful. It was just supposed to be a statement of fact.

ZIMMERMAN: Don't get insubordinative!

RUPERT: I didn't—but—you said—never mind. Sorry. Won't happen again.

ZIMMERMAN: How were you planning to edit your movie?

RUPERT: I was hoping somebody from the library staff could teach me how to do it on one of the computers here.

ZIMMERMAN: Absolutely not. We don't have time. The software is there for you to use, but you'll have to teach yourself, or find someone to teach you.

RUPERT: That's what I was trying to do.

ZIMMERMAN: Watch the attitude, mister. I meant another student.

RUPERT: Could you tell me who else has been using it, and then I'll track them down?

ZIMMERMAN: I'm afraid that's confidential information and I'm not allowed to share it with you.

RUPERT: Why not?

ZIMMERMAN: We're trying to protect your right to privacy. It's nobody's business what anyone else has been reading.

RUPERT: This isn't reading.

ZIMMERMAN: It's the use of library resources. Same thing.

RUPERT: If you don't tell me, how else can I find out?

ZIMMERMAN: Ask around. It's not like the people using the editing software aren't sitting there in plain view of everyone for hours on end.

RUPERT: Who do I ask?

ZIMMERMAN: There are lots of students who hang out in the library. Ask one of them.

RUPERT: Who are they?

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ZIMMERMAN: I'm not allowed to tell you.

RUPERT: What if I go around the library asking the people who are in here now?

ZIMMERMAN: We'd consider that harassment of our patrons and we'd throw you out.

RUPERT: Okay. So I have to teach myself.

ZIMMERMAN: Unless you can find someone to teach you.

RUPERT: Right. Got that part. Maybe I could hire somebody.

ZIMMERMAN: Can you afford to hire a video editor?

RUPERT: I don't know. Maybe.

ZIMMERMAN: You're that serious about this?

RUPERT: I wouldn't be taking up your time if I wasn't.

ZIMMERMAN: All right. Hang on a minute. I've got something that might interest you.

(ZIMMERMAN pulls a piece of paper—a flyer for the film contest—out of the wastebasket, handling it as if it's soggy and disgusting. HE/SHE gives it to RUPERT and then cleans his/her hands with a small bottle of hand sanitizer.)

RUPERT: ***(taking the paper with some reluctance)*** What is it?

ZIMMERMAN: I would have thought you could read it as easily as I could, but since I guess that's not the case, the local Triangle Club is having a film contest. Whoever submits the best film about making the world a better place, wins five hundred dollars and all of the entries get screened for the community.

RUPERT: The Triangle Club—the service organization?

ZIMMERMAN: That's the one.

RUPERT: Cool. Make the world a better place, huh? Yeah. I've got some ideas about that.

(BLACKOUT. The book cart and wastebasket are removed and the giraffe puppet is placed DRC. The curtain remains closed.)

SCENE 4: WALKING HOME FROM SCHOOL, THAT AFTERNOON

AT RISE: RUPERT and CLIFF enter from L on the apron. They slowly make their ways across the stage as the scene progresses. They should be lit either by spots or a series of crossfades. Both are carrying their bookbags.

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

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

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CLIFF: He would have if that teacher hadn't stopped him. He pushed both of us!

RUPERT: You kind of set him off.

CLIFF: He was bullying us!

RUPERT: He's a dumb jerk. What do you expect?

CLIFF: I expect him to get suspended! I expect to not get detention for standing up to him! We both got the same punishment!

RUPERT: You have to be better than him.

CLIFF: You're too passive.

RUPERT: I try not to make waves.

CLIFF: You say you want social justice, but you don't want to make waves?

RUPERT: Can we please not take the shortcut through the woods today?

CLIFF: Don't change the subject.

RUPERT: I'm not. I just don't want to take the woods.

CLIFF: It takes us half the time to get from school to our neighborhood. Why do you always want to go the long way?

RUPERT: For one thing, it's paved.

CLIFF: This is a natural environment, for crying out loud. You're always complaining about development and how people are ruining the planet and stuff. I'd think you'd like the outdoors.

RUPERT: I do like the outdoors. I'm all for mud and dirt. I'd just rather not have them on me.

CLIFF: You're such a sissy. I think you're scared of the woods.

RUPERT: No, I'm not!

CLIFF: The woods represent the unknown.

RUPERT: They're *trees*.

CLIFF: And there could be something behind each and every one of them. Under the leaves on the ground. . . ready to reach out and grab you! (**grabs RUPERT from behind**)

RUPERT: Fine, we'll go through the woods!

CLIFF: That's the spirit!

RUPERT: What's *up* with you?

CLIFF: You got your camcorder. You want to make the world better? You need to show a little backbone.

RUPERT: Says you. But actually, Mrs. Zimmerman in the library told me about this film contest, and that's the theme.

CLIFF: What? Backbone?

RUPERT: No. A better world.

CLIFF: A better world? That's kind of broad.

RUPERT: Gives us a broad canvas to paint on. Editing might be a problem, but I'll figure something out.

CLIFF: What's the prize?

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RUPERT: Five hundred bucks.

CLIFF: Not bad. Are we going to work on this together?

RUPERT: Is there any way I can keep your fingers out of it?

CLIFF: No.

RUPERT: Then there's your answer. But I'm in charge, okay?

CLIFF: Why you?

RUPERT: Because it's my camcorder. It's my movie. It's going to be my vision.

CLIFF: Fine. You're the one with all the big ideas, anyway. I'll be your support crew. How are we going to split the winnings?

RUPERT: We have to win, first.

CLIFF: It's good to plan ahead.

RUPERT: We pay off all expenses, and then however many people we have involved, we divide the money equally. How's that?

CLIFF: How many people are you going to involve?

RUPERT: I dunno. However many we need. Depends on what we do. The individual shares won't be that big, but I'm not doing this for the money.

CLIFF: I'm happy for you. Got any ideas?

RUPERT: Well, I was kind of thinking that I'd like to do something about how we're all in bondage to materialism. That we're so in love with the accumulation of physical objects that we ignore the needs of people—you know, like, people locally and all over the world.

CLIFF: This from the recent recipient of an expensive piece of electronic equipment.

RUPERT: It's a tool! It's not like it's some useless collectible!

CLIFF: Like what? A *Star Wars* action figure?

RUPERT: Yeah. I can't believe that there are adults who actually collect those. I mean—there are so many other worthwhile things you could do with your money.

CLIFF: And there are many other worthwhile things that you could make a movie about. Your idea sounds really boring.

RUPERT: It's my movie. **(stops, looking at the giraffe puppet on the stage)** What is that?

CLIFF: Looks like a dead animal. Pick it up and see.

RUPERT: I'm not going to pick it up.

CLIFF: Okay. Lick it.

RUPERT: What? I'm not going to lick it to see if it's a dead animal. You lick it.

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

RUPERT: **(kneeling to look at the puppet)** It's like—a stuffed animal.

CLIFF: How do you know?

RUPERT: It has plastic eyes and a tag.

CLIFF: Huh. Bummer.

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RUPERT: (*picking it up*) It's a puppet. And it's really ugly.

CLIFF: What kind of animal is it supposed to be?

RUPERT: I think it's supposed to be a giraffe.

CLIFF: I think you're right. Maybe.

RUPERT: That's quite possibly the most amazing facial expression I've ever seen on an inanimate object. It looks like it's either drugged out of its mind or it's an axe murderer or something.

CLIFF: Now there's an idea for a movie—an axe-murdering puppet!

RUPERT: Be serious.

CLIFF: I am serious. You could call it *The Bloody Attack of the Evil, Demonic Giraffe Puppet*.

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

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

RUPERT: That's stupid.

CLIFF: It's a lot more interesting than your idea.

RUPERT: No.

CLIFF: Okay—how about this—it's like a symbol or something. The person who owns the puppet can't bring himself to get rid of it even though it's committing these murders. He's like, addicted to the puppet. And the puppet symbolizes all this materialism crap that you whine about and the link between the puppet and its owner symbolizes society's addiction to materialism. (*leans on RUPERT, self-satisfied*)

RUPERT: You're really stretching it.

CLIFF: No, I'm not. It's been done! And done well!

RUPERT: No, it hasn't!

CLIFF: Think! Gollum in *Lord of the Rings*. Frodo and Bilbo, too. They all get addicted to their precious ring, even though it punishes them and brings out the worst parts of their natures.

RUPERT: I don't think that's what Tolkien was shooting for.

CLIFF: Intentional or not, the subtext was there!

RUPERT: I can pretty much guarantee that it wasn't intentional.

CLIFF: Then think what you can do with that concept if you approach it intentionally!

RUPERT: No.

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: Yeah.

CLIFF: You. . . are going to carry. . . that. . . home?

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

CLIFF: You're such a bleeding heart tree hugger, you know that?

(BLACKOUT. The curtain opens for the next scene.)

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

(At L, 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.

(PHOEBE enters from L. SHE is a teenager dressed in sweats and flip-flops. If possible, SHE has frizzy hair. SHE speaks in a flat monotone and is extremely lethargic. Carrying a bookbag would require too much effort for her.)

PHOEBE: Are you the guy doing the film?

RUPERT: Yeah!

PHOEBE: I think I might like to help.

RUPERT: Okay, great. Let's hang out and see who else shows up.
What's your name?

PHOEBE: Phoebe Brody.

RUPERT: Nice to meet you Phoebe. Do you act?

PHOEBE: No, not really.

RUPERT: Do you want to act?

PHOEBE: I don't know. Probably not.

RUPERT: Do you do camera work?

PHOEBE: No.

RUPERT: Makeup? Costumes?

PHOEBE: No.

RUPERT: Editing? Special effects?

PHOEBE: No.

CLIFF: What do you do?

PHOEBE: Nothing.

RUPERT: Do any of the things I mentioned interest you?

PHOEBE: No.

RUPERT: Right. Well, I'm sure we can find something for you to do.

PHOEBE: Okay.

(PHOEBE lies down on the table. RUPERT and CLIFF look at each other in mild alarm and confusion. TIANA enters from L and looks at PHOEBE. TIANA wears an approximation of a Japanese school girl uniform—white blouse with a blue or red scarf or tie around her

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neck; knee-length black, blue or plaid skirt (shorts underneath recommended); white socks, and black shoes. SHE carries a bookbag.)

TIANA: Are you sick?

PHOEBE: No.

TIANA: Are you sleepy?

PHOEBE: No.

CLIFF: (**grabbing PHOEBE's wrist and checking her pulse**) Are you dead?

PHOEBE: No.

(CLIFF drops PHOEBE's arm in mild exasperation. The arm flops down and dangles limply off the side of the table.)

TIANA: Is this the movie meeting?

RUPERT: Yeah. Hi. I recognize you from around school, but I don't know you.

TIANA: I'm Tiana Buckle. (**sits on table, moving PHOEBE's legs if necessary**)

CLIFF: What do you do?

TIANA: I read manga.

PHOEBE: What's a manga?

TIANA: Japanese comics.

PHOEBE: You can speak Japanese?

TIANA: No. They're translated into English.

PHOEBE: Oh.

TIANA: But they read backwards, 'cause like, the Japanese read backwards.

PHOEBE: You can read backwards?

TIANA: Yeah! Well, kind of. Maybe not. The letters and words go the right way, but the panels, word balloons and pages go backwards.

RUPERT: Right.

CLIFF: Do you do anything besides read manga?

TIANA: Um...

RUPERT: Do you want to be in the movie?

TIANA: Oh, wow! Could I really?

RUPERT: Well, we're going to see how many people we get and figure that out.

(VIRGINIA enters from L, carrying her bookbag.)

CLIFF: Hi, Virginia. Go away.

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

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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.

CLIFF: Are you going to try to convert us to veganism?

VIRGINIA: If you eat meat in front of me, I will.

CLIFF: Wouldn't that subvert your mother's goal of broadening your horizons by getting you to hang out with evil meat-eaters? If we stop eating meat, then your horizons will stop broadening.

VIRGINIA: Yeah, but then I'll like you.

CLIFF: I don't want you to like me.

VIRGINIA: I can always find some other animal murderers to hang out with if I start liking you.

PHOEBE: 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's intense. It must be really hard.

VIRGINIA: Not really. **(sits at end of table farthest from RUPERT)** I know that I'm a better person than you. Plus, I'm a lot healthier and I'll live longer.

(JACK enters from L.)

RUPERT: Oh, no.

JACK: I guess you're meeting about the movie, right?

CLIFF: What do you want, Jack?

JACK: What I want is to leave. Or to beat the snot out of you and then leave. Unfortunately, my guidance counselor, the assistant football coach, had the brilliant idea that I needed to make peace with you guys, and that I should be in this movie you're doing.

CLIFF: Mr. Watts told you to hang out with two students whom he knows you've bullied and with whom you almost got into a fight? Is he trying to get us killed?

JACK: I think it's his idea of creative punishment since I didn't get suspended.

CLIFF: Is he punishing you or us?

JACK: Probably both.

RUPERT: Jack, don't take this the wrong way, but we don't want you here.

JACK: I don't want to be here, but I don't have a choice.

RUPERT: But this film is a non-school-related activity. He can't force you into it, and we shouldn't have to take you if we don't want you.

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JACK: The administration isn't real happy with me. I should have been suspended three or four times this year, but they didn't do it because I was too important to the football team. But, as of last Saturday, football season is over. I'm out of leverage. If I forget to push in a chair in the cafeteria, they're going to throw the book at me. I can't afford to not be in this film.

RUPERT: Are you begging?

JACK: No. I'm threatening.

CLIFF: You're threatening? You just said that if you do something to us, you'll get suspended!

JACK: Not if I wait until next football season.

RUPERT: Cliff, come over here for a minute.

(RUPERT and CLIFF cross DLC. A light comes up on them as the rest of the lights dim.)

CLIFF: You're not going to go along with this are you? Come on, tell me you've got at least a little bit of a spine!

RUPERT: We can make this work to our advantage.

CLIFF: How?

RUPERT: If he's part of this, he has to do what I tell him.

CLIFF: What are you going to tell him to do?

RUPERT: I don't know. But we can come up with some pretty embarrassing stuff. And we can get it on film.

CLIFF: And we can show it to the public.

RUPERT: Better yet—we can save it to use as blackmail material for next year.

CLIFF: Coming from you, that's remarkably vicious. I'm proud of you.

RUPERT: So, he's in?

CLIFF: You're the boss.

(RUPERT and CLIFF cross back to JACK. The lighting returns to normal.)

RUPERT: Okay, Jack. You're in. But I'm in charge.

JACK: Not of me, you aren't.

RUPERT: You give me any trouble, I report it back to your guidance counselor.

JACK: You do, and you'll be miserable next fall.

RUPERT: I'll take that chance.

JACK: Your funeral. **(to VIRGINIA)** Move.

VIRGINIA: Why?

JACK: If you don't, you're going to find a Chicken McNugget nailed to your locker in the morning.

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(JACK takes VIRGINIA's chair as VIRGINIA moves to another seat.)

RUPERT: **(to CLIFF)** You think anyone else is coming?

CLIFF: I think they'd be here by now.

RUPERT: Light turnout.

CLIFF: We can make it work.

RUPERT: I'd really like to have more.

CLIFF: My cousin Alice was an extra in a couple of movies 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. I appreciate your interest in my movie.

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

CLIFF: Why do you have the giraffe puppet in your backpack, Rupert?

RUPERT: I forgot to throw it away.

JACK: Riiight. Freak.

TIANA: What's the movie going to be about?

RUPERT: Well, I'd like to do something about how society is in bondage to materialism, and how we're so distracted by our culture of the accumulation of possessions, that we lose sight of the importance of people. It's called *Materialism and the Decay of Morality in Postmodern Society*.

VIRGINIA: That sounds really boring.

TIANA: **(unenthused)** Oh.

JACK: You lost me at bondage.

PHOEBE: Hm.

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)**

PHOEBE: **(to RUPERT, assuming the meeting is over)** Mm. Bye. **(sits up)**

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*.

(Lights dim except for one light on RUPERT and CLIFF.)

RUPERT: What are you doing?

CLIFF: Saving your movie.

RUPERT: This is not what I want!

CLIFF: Then stop me.

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(The lights return to normal. CLIFF addresses the group.)

CLIFF: The puppet represents materialism. There's a bunch of symbolic, high-level intellectual garbage that you don't have to understand, but your English teachers will love it. But it'll be like filming a straight slasher film. Just leave the subtext to Rupert.

(Again, the lights dim except for one light on RUPERT and CLIFF.)

RUPERT: You're ruining this!

CLIFF: You're not stopping me!

(Lights return to normal.)

TIANA: That sounds kind of cool.

JACK: Please kill me, now.

PHOEBE: Oh. You mean we're not done? **(lies back down on table)**

VIRGINIA: Does the blood in the attack come from people, or is it donated from a blood bank?

CLIFF: We'll use fake blood.

VIRGINIA: **(moving to CLIFF)** Well, duh. I mean, in the story, whose blood is it?

CLIFF: The victims'.

VIRGINIA: Are the victims people or animals?

CLIFF: People.

VIRGINIA: Do people count as meat?

CLIFF: Yeah.

VIRGINIA: Well, does the giraffe eat people?

CLIFF: No.

VIRGINIA: Okay, good. Because vegans don't condone **(mispronouncing "condone")** that sort of behavior and I like, wouldn't be able to 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: **(not really understanding, but accepting it)** Oh, then that's okay.

TIANA: Why does the giraffe puppet maul people to death?

CLIFF: Because it's evil.

TIANA: Why's it evil?

CLIFF: Because it's demonic.

TIANA: Okay.

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RUPERT: (*starting slowly, then gradually building in intensity as the ideas come to him*) It's been around for centuries. And it's bored. It's bored because it's been killing people and that's all that it's ever done. So it finds this guy—it makes the guy think that the guy found it, but really it chose the guy—and it messes with the guy's head. The guy like, becomes addicted to the puppet. He can get rid of the puppet at any time, but he doesn't want to, because it's like a drug, but the puppet starts killing people, and the guy could get rid of the puppet, but he can't bring himself to do it. (*gasps in horror at what HE has just said*)

TIANA: Why?

RUPERT: We'll figure it out. And anyway, the puppet just ruins this guy's life and drags him into madness.

TIANA: But the puppet kills a lot of people?

RUPERT: Yeah.

TIANA: And there's lots of blood?

RUPERT: Yeah.

VIRGINIA: But nobody gets eaten—just killed?

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

VIRGINIA: All right! I'm in.

TIANA: Me, too.

PHOEBE: Sure.

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

CLIFF: Okay, I guess that's it for now. We'll meet back here on Monday after Rupert's had a chance to write the screenplay. Thanks for coming!

(PHOEBE, TIANA, and VIRGINIA start to exit L.)

TIANA: This is gonna be so cool.

VIRGINIA: I can use this as a tool to promote veganism.

TIANA: Blood... yes!

CLIFF: I didn't think you had it in you.

RUPERT: I hate you.

CLIFF: You'll thank me.

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

CLIFF: You submitted—? We haven't even shot one frame of film yet!

RUPERT: I wanted to set my destiny!

CLIFF: Set your destiny? I think you'd better submit a new entry form.

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

RUPERT: Me either.

(BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 6: RUPERT'S HOME, THE FOLLOWING SUNDAY

(The set pieces are a living room chair and a small end table, all at R. RUPERT is sitting in the chair marking his newly-written screenplay with a red pen. CLIFF and ALICE enter.

ALICE 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. RUPERT doesn't know ALICE and gives him a few puzzled looks before asking who HE is. ALICE stands R of RUPERT's chair. CLIFF crosses L of RUPERT's chair.)

CLIFF: Hey. Your mom let us in. How's it coming?

RUPERT: Just finished writing the script. I'm doing some editing on it right now.

CLIFF: *(leaning over RUPERT's shoulder)* Lemme see. Wow. You've been busy.

RUPERT: Yeah. Fifteen pages worth. So who's this?

CLIFF: This is my cousin, Alice.

RUPERT: It is?

CLIFF: Our washing machine broke and he came over to help my dad fix it. I thought since he was in the neighborhood, maybe you'd want to meet him.

ALICE: What? Something wrong?

RUPERT: No, no. Not at all. I just thought that, well, you know. . .

ALICE: That I was a girl?

RUPERT: Well, yeah.

ALICE: Do I look like a girl to you?

RUPERT: No.

ALICE: Do I smell like a girl to you?

RUPERT: No.

ALICE: You didn't smell. Go on. Smell. Smell!

(ALICE pulls RUPERT's face into his armpit. RUPERT recoils in disgust.)

ALICE: That there's hard country labor. Sweat. And manure. And cows. Lots of cows. The smell of pride in a job well done.

RUPERT: You have every right to be proud of the way you smell. It says so much about you. Here. Look over the screenplay for a minute. I need to talk to Cliff.

(RUPERT and CLIFF cross DRC. A light comes up on them as all other lights dim.)

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RUPERT: You didn't tell me Alice was a guy.

CLIFF: You didn't ask.

RUPERT: The character I wrote for Alice to play is a girl!

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 always just kind of taken your name for granted.

CLIFF: Alice's parents named him after Alice Cooper.

RUPERT: The rock and roll guy?

CLIFF: Yeah.

RUPERT: Sheesh. Whatever. I guess I need to overhaul that part of the script. Somebody else can do the love scene with Jack.

CLIFF: You wrote a love scene?

RUPERT: Yeah. I figure if we're going to do something related to the slasher genre, we need to at least acknowledge the genre's history. Most slasher flicks, there's teenagers giving in to their hormones and doing stuff their parents wouldn't approve of, and then when they get killed—it's like payback for their sins.

CLIFF: For some reason, I was thinking that the puppet was going to be killing people, whether they deserved it or not.

RUPERT: Well, yeah. It is. But it was just kind of a nod to everything that's come before, you know? Plus, it was an excuse to get Jack to strip down to his underwear.

CLIFF: Strip?

RUPERT: Yeah—blackmail material.

CLIFF: You think he would do that?

RUPERT: Maybe.

CLIFF: I'll humor that thought for a minute. But only a minute. Assuming he did, why not have Virginia or Tiana do the scene with him?

RUPERT: Because Jack would never do a love scene with Virginia or Tiana. Or you. Not that you would. Alice was an unknown quantity, so I hoped for the best.

(RUPERT and CLIFF remain lit as the other lights for the scene come back up. RUPERT and CLIFF look over at ALICE.)

ALICE: What?

RUPERT and CLIFF: ***(in unison)*** Nothing.

(RUPERT and CLIFF remain lit as the other lights dim.)

CLIFF: You're an idiot.

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RUPERT: I know that.

CLIFF: You have enough sense to realize Jack wouldn't do a love scene with Virginia or Tiana, but yet you think you could actually get him in his underwear? On camera?

RUPERT: I was hoping Alice would be a hottie and Jack would succumb to his baser instincts.

CLIFF: Please tell me you weren't hoping to get Alice to strip.

(RUPERT opens his mouth to speak but nothing comes out. HE makes a few feeble explanatory gestures before finally uttering the next line.)

RUPERT: I wasn't going to use it in the final movie.

CLIFF: You say you want to make a serious art film. You chastise me for wanting to make a slasher movie, but your first instinct is to create smut!

RUPERT: No!

CLIFF: Don't lie to me.

RUPERT: Okay, I'm a guy with a camcorder and an opportunity! What did you expect me to do?

CLIFF: From you, I expected better. ***(turns her back to RUPERT and crosses her arms)***

RUPERT: I'm scum.

CLIFF: You're scum.

RUPERT: Are you going to hit me?

CLIFF: I don't want to scum up my hand.

RUPERT: Are you going to leave the film?

CLIFF: No.

RUPERT: You are benevolence personified.

CLIFF: I am the personification of benevolence who is laughing her head off inside that you were hoping for a hot sultry babe and you got that.

(RUPERT and CLIFF remain lit as the rest of the lights for the scene come back up. RUPERT and CLIFF look over at ALICE again.)

ALICE: What?

RUPERT and CLIFF: ***(in unison)*** Nothing.

(RUPERT and CLIFF remain lit as the other lights dim.)

CLIFF: Karma bit you in the seat of the pants on this. If it happened once, it can happen again. Don't ever forget that.

RUPERT: I won't.

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CLIFF: Now, if we could rig up a costume for Jack that's designed to rip when he bends over, we'd be in business.

RUPERT: Do you know how to sew?

CLIFF: No.

(The rest of the lights for the scene come back up.)

RUPERT: Well, I don't know how to sew. Alice, do you know how to sew?

ALICE: What did you just say? *(stands and crosses to RUPERT)*

RUPERT: Uh. . .

ALICE: What did you just say? Did you just ask me if I know how to sew? You trying to make some kind of cheap joke about my name?

RUPERT: No. Actually, we need somebody who knows how to sew. For real. We don't. I was just checking. But that was stupid of me. Because you're a manly man and you obviously wouldn't know how to do a girly-girl thing like sew.

ALICE: Are you calling me a girly-girl for knowing how to sew?

RUPERT: You know how to sew?

ALICE: Of course, I know how to sew! It's a practical, honest, and useful skill and I'm proud of it! You get a problem with that?!

RUPERT: No. No. Uh. . .

ALICE: You got something to say?

RUPERT: I. . . uh. . .

ALICE: Well, spit it out!

RUPERT: Could you rig us up a pair of pants that'll split open?

ALICE: They ain't for me, are they?

RUPERT: No. They're for Jack—another guy in the cast.

ALICE: From what Cliff told me about the movie, I didn't think it was gonna have lowbrow humor-type stuff in it.

RUPERT: Actually, it doesn't. To be honest, I just wanted footage of Jack in his underwear, for personal reasons.

ALICE: *(taking a step back from RUPERT)* I'll bet you do.

RUPERT: Oh, no—it's not like that. I—

CLIFF: Karma, karma, karma.

RUPERT: Karma me? But the ripping pants—you—

ALICE: Listen, I got a problem with your script. It says they find the puppet in the woods.

RUPERT: How is that a problem?

ALICE: The woods are a total cliché. Every cheap, no-budget, B-movie uses the woods. M. Night Shyamalan runs out of ideas, he goes to the woods. Don't be M. Night Shyamalan. Be different. Be original. Have them find the puppet someplace else. Someplace that totally radiates pure evil.

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RUPERT: Like, where?

ALICE: Floating in the toilet.

RUPERT: The toilet?

ALICE: Yeah!

RUPERT: How do you equate toilets with evil?

ALICE: Have you ever cleaned a toilet?

RUPERT: Yes. It wasn't that bad.

ALICE: Then your family isn't eating enough broccoli.

RUPERT: Let's just have the main character find it in the woods. That's what actually happened. I found the puppet—

ALICE: You actually found a giraffe puppet in the woods? **(gets close to RUPERT and puts a hand on his shoulder)** Rupert, you're testing fate. You don't want the movie to imitate real life. If you make the puppet sentient and evil in the movie and then have the movie be like real life, the puppet might actually be sentient and evil in real life.

RUPERT: Me, throwing bits of reality into a work of fiction, isn't going to make the made-up parts become real.

ALICE: But they could already be real.

RUPERT: Then me filming them wouldn't change anything.

ALICE: But it could make them more real. I'm just saying. . . don't tempt fate, you know?

RUPERT: Don't tempt fate.

ALICE: Don't tempt fate. Use the toilet. It'll be awesome. Trust me.

(BLACKOUT.)

SCENE 7 – THE CAFETERIA, AFTER SCHOOL THE NEXT DAY

(CLIFF and RUPERT are adding two more chairs to the cafeteria table. ALICE is already sitting. There is a stack of scripts on the table. TIANA, PHEOBE, and VIRGINIA enter. RUPERT, CLIFF, TIANA and PHOEBE have their bookbags.)

VIRGINIA: Got the scripts?

RUPERT: **(handing them scripts)** Right here.

(TIANA and VIRGINIA sit. TIANA ignores her script, pulls a manga out of her bookbag, and starts looking at it intently. PHOEBE lies down on the table. JACK enters.)

JACK: Nuts. Rupert, I was really hoping you got killed in a car crash over the weekend or something. **(RUPERT hands him a script)**

CLIFF: You're such a jerk. I'd never wish that on you. I'd be happy for you to just spend the rest of your life in traction.

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RUPERT: Everybody, I'd like to introduce Cliff's cousin, Alice.

(ALICE yawns. There is a long pause as everyone looks at ALICE, trying to make sense of RUPERT'S statement.)

RUPERT: He was named after Alice Cooper.

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

RUPERT: Alice, this is Virginia, Tiana, Phoebe, and Jack.

ALICE: Hey.

RUPERT: Now what I'd like to do is—

ALICE: So Rupert, who's playing David, the main character?

RUPERT: Well, if nobody has any objections, me.

JACK: Go right ahead. The smaller my part, the better.

ALICE: **(standing and crossing his arms)** What makes you qualified over me?

CLIFF: Any hack can be the lead. The talented character actors are the ones who get the really juicy parts.

ALICE: So you cast yourself in the lead because you can't act?

CLIFF: **(before RUPERT has a chance to respond)** Absolutely.

ALICE: That sounds pretty consistent with standard Hollywood practice. I can accept that. **(sits)**

RUPERT: Cliff is going to do the voice of the puppet and another character in the office scene. We don't have a lot of people, so I had to double some of your parts. Tiana is playing my character's wife, and then she's got another part later on as an old librarian.

TIANA: **(still holding her manga, crosses to RUPERT, making karate chops in the air)** Could you make me a martial arts librarian? That'd be cool. Oh, and you know what—I could have an army of ninjas to guard the library, because like, ninjas are the ultimate stealth fighters and they'd be perfect for library security and stuff. Way better than noisy alarms by the door.

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 and popular and if you set the movie there then people would want to see the movie because they all like manga and manga comes from Japan.

RUPERT: I... can't say that I've ever been to Japan, but I doubt that any of the buildings around here look Japanese.

TIANA: But you're not sure?

RUPERT: Not 100%. But I'm kind of sure.

TIANA: Well, I doubt most of the audience will have ever been there either, so they won't be sure. So if we narrow it down to one specific

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place in Japan, probably most people won't have been there, and nobody will really know the difference.

ALICE: Vancouver doubles for a lot of cities. It could work.

RUPERT: This isn't Vancouver!

ALICE: Same principle.

TIANA: So we go with one really cool, exotic place that hardly anybody around here has been to, that they'd like to go to, and it'll make them want to see the movie and nobody will know the difference. Like, oh—Tokyo! Yeah, that's it! Tokyo! Oh, I feel so smart!

VIRGINIA: That sounds like a cool idea. Are the Tokyoans all vegans?

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

VIRGINIA: But aren't the Japanese all 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. What do you think, Phoebe?

PHOEBE: Oh, I don't care.

CLIFF: Are you sure about that?

PHOEBE: No.

VIRGINIA: Jack, what about you?

JACK: I don't give a flying—

VIRGINIA: Okay, that's most of us, so we don't have to ask Cliff and Rupert what they think because it doesn't matter.

RUPERT: What do you mean it doesn't matter? This is my movie! I'm the director!

VIRGINIA: (*stands*) Actors are more important than directors.

RUPERT: What, you're going to go on strike if we don't set the movie in Japan?

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—

PHOEBE: I ate some sushi once.

TIANA: Sushi is Japanese!

PHOEBE: It had imitation crab meat in it.

VIRGINIA: Imitation crab meat? *Imitation crab meat?* (*pointing at PHOEBE*) See? See? Most people—they would just kill the poor little crabs and eat them, because they're like fish and people don't think fish count as meat, but they do because they're alive and stuff, and the Japanese are so much more caring people than all you blood-gorged carnivores, that they make imitation meat to put in their seussy so they don't have to kill the sweet little fish. So for the sake of every last underwater animal in the world, we're going to be a

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good example and set the movie in Tokyo, or you're not going to have a cast. **(sits)**

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

PHOEBE: 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.)

ALICE: What?

JACK: **(starts to point at ALICE, sees an opportunity, and directs his scorn at RUPERT)** I just 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—you—they—

CLIFF: I think it would do you some good to resolve this on your own. You're the director. Ball's in your court on this one.

RUPERT: But—but—ball—Japan—imitation—no—fish—

(RUPERT looks at everyone staring back at him.)

RUPERT: Okay. Okay! Tokyo! We'll go with Tokyo!

TIANA: Can all the dialogue be in Japanese?

RUPERT: No!

TIANA: Why not?

RUPERT: Do you speak Japanese?

TIANA: No.

RUPERT: I don't, either.

TIANA: Do any of you speak Japanese?

GROUP: No. Uh-uh. Just a couple words. Etc.

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

RUPERT: But nobody would be able to understand the dialogue.

ALICE: You could put captions at the bottom of the screen with the English translations.

RUPERT: Will you shut up!

CLIFF: But if they're speaking gibberish, it would just translate to gibberish at the bottom of the screen.

RUPERT: Yes. Thank you. That's exactly right.

TIANA: But hardly anybody in the audience will speak Japanese. They won't know the difference. Just like they won't know it isn't really Tokyo.

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

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

RUPERT: No. Please.

VIRGINIA: You made her cry.

JACK: Way to go, Rupert.

PHOEBE: That's not very nice.

ALICE: Don't you think maybe you should apologize?

VIRGINIA: Yeah. You ought to give her what she wants just to make up for being such a jerk.

JACK: Yeah, Rupert. You're a jerk.

RUPERT: Cliff—

CLIFF: You wanted to be in charge.

(TIANA sobs loudly.)

RUPERT: All right! We'll shoot in fake Japanese with English subtitles!

TIANA: (**instantly springing back to her feet**) Yay! Cool! Thank you! I promise it'll be the coolest thing ever and you won't regret it. Oh—oh—and you know what you could do?

RUPERT: What?

TIANA: 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" and then at the bottom of the screen have the subtitle, "To be or not to be."

VIRGINIA: What's Katsu—whatever really mean?

TIANA: It's the names of the creators of *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!

ALICE: That's a really good idea.

TIANA: Thanks!

RUPERT: (**dubiously**) You know enough Japanese names to make the dialogue all sound different?

TIANA: Oh, yeah! (**happily and abruptly sits down on the floor and starts reading her manga**)

RUPERT: Of course, you do. All right. I don't have any better ideas. (**looks at VIRGINIA**) Virginia?

VIRGINIA: Yeah?

RUPERT: You're going to play Detective Jones, one of the detectives tracking the puppet murders, and Alice is playing your partner, Detective Portman. . . okay?

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ALICE: (*engrossed in reading the screenplay*) Mm.

VIRGINIA: Every character in the movie is a vegan, right?

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

VIRGINIA: And the movie's set in Tokyo?

RUPERT: Tokyo. Right. Tokyo.

VIRGINIA: Then I'm happy.

RUPERT: (*looking upwards as if to Heaven*) Thank you. (*looks at JACK*) Jack?

JACK: What?

RUPERT: You're playing Bob. You're a co-worker of David, the main character. You get killed by the puppet.

JACK: Short and sweet?

RUPERT: Yeah.

JACK: Sounds great.

RUPERT: And then you're also playing the role of Max—

JACK: One part is enough.

RUPERT: You have no power here.

JACK: Next fall. (*draws his finger across his throat in a slitting motion*)

RUPERT: Max is best friends with Rob, played by Alice.

ALICE: Whoa. Whoa.

RUPERT: What?

ALICE: I saw that page. There was something funny on that page.

VIRGINIA: Funny funny or bad funny?

ALICE: (*crosses to RUPERT*) Bad funny. Bad, bad funny. Something here about. . . they kiss?

JACK: No! No way! Absolutely not! If you expect me to—

ALICE: If you expect *me* to—

RUPERT: No! That's changed! Sorry. Left over from an earlier draft. No kissing. It's a handshake. They're just friends. Honest.

ALICE: You sure about that?

RUPERT: Positive.

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.

CLIFF: Hey, Rupert? What's Phoebe going to do?

RUPERT: She's going to be the gaffer.

PHOEBE: What's a gaffer?

RUPERT: I'm not sure. I always see it in the film credits, so I know we need one. Why don't you look it up online and let me know?

PHOEBE: No, I don't want to look it up.

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RUPERT: Okay. I guess I'll look it up sometime. Unless—Cliff, you don't know what a gaffer is, do you?

CLIFF: If you don't know, I'm not telling you.

RUPERT: Alice, do you know—

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

RUPERT: Vaguely.

ALICE: It's got a lot of really deep stuff in it. I think about it a lot.

RUPERT: Oh, please, no.

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!

RUPERT: You want to put military leprechauns in the movie?

TIANA: What about yakuza gangster leprechauns? Extorting each other's gold and running protection rackets?

ALICE: No. That'd be silly. Trust me, I've thought about this. Military leprechauns launching tactical strikes against humans for stealing their gold. It'd be cool.

JACK: (*mockingly*) What if they were out for revenge against humans for stepping on other leprechauns?

ALICE: Dude, you rock!

CLIFF: (*crosses to ALICE*) Alice, the leprechaun thing has been done.

ALICE: By who?

CLIFF: Warwick Davis.

ALICE: Who's Warwick Davis?

CLIFF: You know the Ewoks in *Return of the Jedi*?

ALICE: Yeah.

CLIFF: Well he was the one—

ALICE: Don't bother. They all look alike to me.

TIANA: You are so racist!

ALICE: I'm not racist. They're little bears. They didn't even have names in the movie. It's not like I collect the geek action figures or whatever.

CLIFF: Are you implying that I collect action figures?

ALICE: Do you know the name of the Ewok that this Warwick Davis person played?

CLIFF: Yes.

ALICE: Then I think that there's an alarmingly strong possibility that you collect action figures.

CLIFF: Just because you're my cousin, doesn't give you the right to mouth off at me.

ALICE: It's just suspicious. That's all I'm saying.

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CLIFF: My mother has naked baby pictures of you. I know where they are. You accuse me of collecting action figures again and those pictures go straight to the Internet.

ALICE: You wouldn't.

CLIFF: Try me.

ALICE: Okay. Maybe you don't collect action figures.

CLIFF: Darn straight. Anyway—*Willow*. Have you seen *Willow*?

ALICE: The chick from *Buffy the Vampire Slayer*?

CLIFF: What about the *Harry Potter* movies? You've seen them, right?

ALICE: Not willingly.

CLIFF: Warwick Davis is the actor who plays Professor Flitwick.

ALICE: Which one is Flitwick?

CLIFF: The short one!

ALICE: The little midget/dwarf dude?

CLIFF: Yes!

ALICE: Why didn't you just say so?

CLIFF: Because—never mind! Warwick Davis starred in a series of low-budget horror movies called *Leprechaun*.

ALICE: Somebody made a horror movie about a leprechaun?

CLIFF: Six movies.

ALICE: Six?

CLIFF: Six. *Leprechaun*, *Leprechaun 2*, *Leprechaun 3*, *Leprechaun 4: In Space*, *Leprechaun in the Hood*, and *Leprechaun: Back 2 tha Hood*.

ALICE: *Leprechaun: Back 2 tha Hood*? You seriously expect me to believe that?

CLIFF: And you call yourself a film buff. The tagline was "Evil has a whole new rap!"

ALICE: You are so full of crap.

CLIFF: Look it up! The violent leprechaun angle has already been done!

(RUPERT appears enormously relieved.)

ALICE: Well, so what? That was only six movies! Do you know how many war movies have been made? How many westerns? These things endure. There's plenty of room in the cinematic lexicon for more than just six movies with violent leprechauns in them.

(CLIFF gives up and returns to her seat.)

VIRGINIA: What's a lexicon?

ALICE: **(snapping his fingers in inspiration)** Hey—we should imply that there's some kind of back story between the leprechauns and the giraffe puppet, to give the movie an epic quality.

RUPERT: But leprechauns are Irish! They don't live in Japan!

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ALICE: You ever been to Japan?

RUPERT: No.

ALICE: Then how do you know?

RUPERT: Because leprechauns are make-believe!

ALICE: Then what's the problem with having them be in Japan?

RUPERT: **(trying a different tactic)** Nobody here is that small.

ALICE: Just cheat the perspective like they did with the hobbits in *Lord of the Rings*. Film them from a high angle so they look short.

VIRGINIA: Are leprechauns vegans?

TIANA: All the green they wear, they'd have to be.

VIRGINIA: Okay.

ALICE: Rupert, nobody's ever done Japanese leprechauns. You'll be breaking new ground.

RUPERT: **(attempting to stare down ALICE)** If there are leprechauns in the movie, you're playing one of them.

ALICE: You want me to run around in camouflage and fight against hopeless odds in the name of vengeance? Sounds like a plan.

(RUPERT crosses to table, sits, and bangs his head on the table.)

JACK: You okay?

RUPERT: Why do you care?

JACK: Just being hopeful.

RUPERT: You're playing one, too.

JACK: What? No!

RUPERT: The vengeance thing was your idea. If we have leprechauns, you're going to be one!

JACK: There is no way I'm going to—

RUPERT: You want me to tell Mr. Watts you're hindering the production?

JACK: Next fall, Rupert. Next fall.

RUPERT: Only if this movie doesn't kill me first.

(BLACKOUT. CURTAIN.)

ACT II

SCENE 1: RUPERT'S BACK YARD, A FEW DAYS LATER

(On the apron in front of the closed curtain, RUPERT is holding a camcorder mounted on a tripod above his head. CLIFF is standing by, ready to catch the camcorder if RUPERT drops it. JACK and ALICE, dressed in leprechaun costumes and holding green pipes, skip onstage from L, singing. VIRGINIA and TIANA are standing RC. VIRGINIA is watching. TIANA is reading a manga. PHOEBE is lying on her back on the stage, R. CLIFF's lunch bag, RUPERT'S backpack and camera bag, and VIRGINIA's backpack are nearby.)

JACK and ALICE: *(singing to the tune of "Good King Wenceslas")*
Katsuhiko Rumiko Kanada Yoshida!

RUPERT: Cut!

(RUPERT lowers the camcorder and hands it to CLIFF. JACK angrily shakes a fist at RUPERT.)

JACK: Next fall, Rupert! Next fall, 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 and there's nothing you can do about it. 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, your favorite color of "Depends" undergarments and how dry they keep you, or anything else that comes to mind. And then I can post it on the Internet for the whole world to see. So, if you know what's good for your macho jock reputation, back off.

JACK: You do that and I'll—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 get all the CGI blood in there and it's going to be cool as crap. *(squishes imaginary crap between his hands, then puts one hand on RUPERT's shoulder)* He's going to come begging to be in your next movie.

RUPERT: CGI blood?

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ALICE: Well, there hasn't been any blood in anything we've filmed, so I'm figuring you're going to add it in post. Right?

VIRGINIA: Does the tape bleed if you put a post in it?

TIANA: No—like, special effects—post production—are you going to put digital blood in the movie, Rupert? Oh, wow! That'll be cool! I'm impressed!

PHOEBE: Me, too. I guess.

CLIFF: **(knowing full well RUPERT doesn't know a thing about special effects)** Yeah, Rupert. I didn't know you knew how to do digital special effects.

(RUPERT looks helplessly at CLIFF for a second.)

ALICE: So, is that it for today?

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

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

TIANA: Okay! Bye!

VIRGINIA: See ya.

(ALICE, TIANA, and VIRGINIA exit. PHOEBE starts to get up, sees that RUPERT and CLIFF are still there, shrugs her shoulders, and flops back down.)

PHOEBE: Digital blood seems so. . . hard. 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.

PHOEBE: 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.

PHOEBE: 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.

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