

THE SECRET LIFE OF HUBIE HARTZEL

By Susan Rowan Masters

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By Susan Rowan Masters

BASED ON THE NOVEL THE SECRET LIFE OF HUBIE HARTZEL BY SUSAN ROWAN MASTERS

SYNOPSIS: Hubie is a teenage daydreamer, an artist and a hopeless romantic, but life is complicated in sixth grade. Hubie faces homework hassles, an impossible older sister, a beloved cat who is dying, and Ralph Marruci, class bully. But Hubie has an escape from everyday travails: using a pencil and his trusty sketchpad he imagines himself a champion prizefighter! Unfortunately, Hubie's attempts at coping with life backfire when the perfect plan for revenge on Marruci blows up in his face. Good thing Hubie finds the courage to stand up to the bully and do the right thing.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(5 males, 6 females, 2-6 either)

HUBIE HARTZEL (m)	..... Teenage daydreamer. (173 lines) also plays ALTER EGO (m) Hubie's fantasies. (20 lines)
FRANK VITANZA (m)	..... Hubie's best friend. (55 lines)
RALPH MARRUCI (m)	..... Class bully and Hubie's nemesis. (21 lines)
BRENDA HARTZEL (f)	..... Hubie's 14-year old sister. (25 lines)
MRS. BUNCE (f)	..... Hubie's teacher. (13 lines)
MRS. HARTZEL (f)	..... Hubie's mother. (34 lines)
MR. HARTZEL (m)	..... Hubie's father. (23 lines)
BETH PRINGLE (f)	..... Classmate who Frank Vitanza has a crush on. (13 lines)
LANA SLOMONSKY (f)	..... Young, pretty art teacher who Hubie has a crush on. (37 lines)
SHELLY HOFF (f)	..... Classmate who Ralph Marruci has a crush on. (2 lines)
FRED FERKLE (m)	..... Hartzel family cat. (3 lines)
RING ANNOUNCER (f/m)	..... Dream sequence. (5 lines)
RADIO ANNOUNCER (f/m)	..... Dream sequence. (1 line)

ANNOUNCER (f/m) Dream sequence. (1 line)
REFEREE (f/m) Dream sequence. (2 lines)
VOICE (f/m) Offstage voice, as if over the
school PA system. (2 lines)
MOURNER (f/m) Dream sequence. (3 lines)

NOTES ABOUT CASTING:

ALTER EGO is played by the same actor as HUBIE unless the Dream Sequences are performed behind a scrim.

FRED FERKLE is a stuffed animal during the scenes and an actual actor during the Dream Sequences.

DOUBLING OPTIONS: RADIO ANNOUNCER, ANNOUNCER, VOICE and MOURNER could be played by the same actor. Also, the actor playing RING ANNOUNCER or REFEREE could play RADIO ANNOUNCER, ANNOUNCER, VOICE and/or MOURNER.

TIME: Present

THEME MUSIC / FINALE

“Acoustic Ukulele Fun”

<http://www.pond5.com/stock-music/12314573/acoustic-ukulele-fun.html>

“The Best Day of My Life” by American Authors

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SYNOPSIS OF SCENES

SCENE 1: SCHOOL HALLWAY

SCENE 2: MATH CLASS

DREAM SEQUENCE 1

DREAM SEQUENCE 2

SCENE 3: HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM AND HUBIE'S BEDROOM

DREAM SEQUENCE 3

DREAM SEQUENCE 4

SCENE 4: ART CLASS

SCENE 5: HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM AND HUBIE'S BEDROOM

DREAM SEQUENCE 5

SCENE 6: ART CLASS AND SCHOOL HALLWAY

DREAM SEQUENCE 6

DREAM SEQUENCE 7

DREAM SEQUENCE 8

SCENE 7: SCHOOL HALLWAY

SCENE 8: HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM

SCENE 9: HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM

SCENE 10: HUBIE'S BEDROOM

DREAM SEQUENCE 9

INTERMISSION (Optional)

SCENE 11: SCHOOL HALLWAY

DREAM SEQUENCE 10

SCENE 12: SCHOOL HALLWAY

DREAM SEQUENCE 11

SCENE 13: HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM

SCENE 14: ROW OF LOCKERS

SCENE 15: ART CLASS

DREAM SEQUENCE 12**SCENE 16:** HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM***DREAM SEQUENCE 13*****SCENE 17:** HARTZEL FAMILY ROOM***DREAM SEQUENCE 14*****SCENE 18:** HUBIE'S BEDROOM***DREAM SEQUENCE 15*****SCENE 19:** SCHOOL HALLWAY***DREAM SEQUENCE 16*****SCENE 20:** CAFETERIA**SCENE 21:** HOMEROOM AND AUDITORIUM***DREAM SEQUENCE 17*****PRODUCTION NOTES****SET DESIGN**

The set can be as simple or elaborate as desired. For the classroom scenes, simply use desks, trash cans, and miscellaneous school items. You will need a podium and chair(s) to represent the auditorium and 1-2 lunch tables for the cafeteria. The hallway area could easily be performed in the bare stage area outside of the classroom. Consider something as simple as a couch for the family room and desk and small lamp for the bedroom scene. Audiences will enjoy adding their own imagination to the experience with just a few simple set pieces.

DREAM SEQUENCES

The Dream Sequences can be done many ways: by using special gel lighting and/or a sound to signal the change to a dream sequence, by pre-recording Hubie's daydreams and projection them, or by having actors perform the sequences behind a backlit scrim. There are many other options, and as long as the integrity of the script and story is kept, you are welcome to stage these sequences as fits for your theatre.

SOUND EFFECTS

SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS

SFX: DOG BARKING OFFSTAGE

SFX: CROWD CHEERING AND APPLAUSE

SFX: CAT SNARLS

SFX: CAT MEOWS

PROPS

- DIGITAL MUSIC PLAYER
- NOTEBOOK
- BACKPACK/TEXTBOOK
- STACK OF PAPERS
- NEWSPAPER
- PIE TIN
- JACKET
- TOWEL
- BATON
- BOX OF ART SUPPLIES/SKETCHPAD
- STEPLADDER
- PODIUM
- LUNCH TRAY
- BROWN PAPER BAG
- STUFFED ANIMAL
- "CONE" OR E-COLLAR
- CELL PHONE
- LARGE "GOLD" RING

PRODUCTION HISTORY

The Secret Life of Hubie Hartzel had its world premiere at The Growing Stage – The Children's Theatre of New Jersey on February 7, 2014. It was directed by Stephen L. Fredericks, with the following cast (in order of appearance):

HUBIE HARTZEL/ALTER EGO Danny Campos
FRANK VITANZA P.J. Schweizer
RALPH MARRUCI Josh Carpenter
BETH PRINGLE Natalie Pavelek
MRS. HARTZEL/MRS. BUNCE Lori B. Lawrence
BRENDA HARTZEL Nikole Rizzo
LANA SLOMONSKY Jerielle Morwitz
MR. HARTZEL/FRED FERKLE Jason Scott Quinn
SHELLY HOFF Jillian Petrie

Scenery by Perry Arthur Kroeger

Choreography for dance sequence by Emily Cara Portune

*For Chuck,
Ted and Jon,
With love*

SCENE 1

AT RISE: School hallway before classes begin. Lights up on HUBIE HARTZEL and FRANK VITANZA. RALPH MARRUCI enters, listening to a digital music player.

MARRUCI: Outta my way, **Hu**-bert. (*Shoves HUBIE, then puts an ear bud in and continues across the stage. Exits just as HUBIE speaks.*)

HUBIE: Hey, you stupid jerk, what's left of your brain is coming out your geeky nose.

FRANK: I don't think he heard you, Hubie.

HUBIE: I'm starting a bodybuilding program. And when I'm done – lookout, Marruci! I'm gonna show that bully what real muscles look like.

FRANK: Yeah, right! Marruci is so big his shoes look like aircraft carriers. You're gonna need more than muscles to scare him.

HUBIE: Thanks for the confidence.

FRANK: (*BETH enters.*) **Look,** there's Beth Pringle. And she's heading over here!

HUBIE: Get your eyes back in your sockets.

BETH: Hubie... Frank...

FRANK: (*Dreamily.*) She's calling me.

HUBIE: Oh, brother.

BETH: Did you guys hear about the new art teacher? Her name is Miss Lana Slomonsky. And she begins tomorrow.

HUBIE: So big deal.

BETH: (*Calls to SHELLY offstage.*) Hey, Shelly, wait up! (*Hurries away.*) Did you hear about the new art teacher? (*Exits.*)

HUBIE: Just because Beth's mother is on the school board she thinks she knows everything. (*Beat.*) Slomonsky... what kind of name is that?

FRANK: (*Shrugs.*) Italian maybe?

HUBIE: I just hope this Lana Slomonsky doesn't make us do stupid rope hangings.

FRANK: You mean like the other day? Boy, did the art teacher get mad when she caught you drawing a cartoon of her. (*Laughs.*)

HUBIE: Yeah, real funny, ha, ha... **not!**

SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS.

Come on, or we'll be late to homeroom.

HUBIE and FRANK exit. Blackout.

SCENE 2

SETTING: *Math class.*

AT RISE: *The students are seated at their desks working on an assignment.*

MRS. BUNCE: *(On her right pinky finger is a large gold ring. She takes out a sheet of paper from a stack and calls.)* Beth?

BETH comes up to take her paper.

Hubert?

HUBIE is leaning over his desk doodling in the margin of his notebook.

Hubert? ...**Hubert!**

HUBIE continues to draw. She goes over to him.

Hubert Hartzel!

HUBIE: Huh?

MRS. BUNCE: This is the third time I've called your name. You may be here in body, but your mind is a different matter.

Students snicker as she hands him his paper.

If you paid better attention, Hubert, your grades just might improve.

HUBIE: I'll try harder, Mrs. Bunce.

VOICE: *(Offstage. As if over the PA.)* Mrs. Bunce, can you step out for a few moments to speak with Mr. Adams?

MRS. BUNCE: I'll be right there. *(To the class.)* I expect everyone to continue working on their assignments.

As she leaves, MARRUCI tries to sneak over to SHELLY.

And stay in your seats!

MRS. BUNCE exits. HUBIE crumples up his math paper and tosses it into a nearby trashcan. Then he takes out a clean sheet from his notebook and begins to draw.

DREAM SEQUENCE 1

ALTER EGO: I'm on my knees, my neck stretched over a chopping block. I turn to look up. A black-hooded executioner is looming overhead, a raised ax in its chubby hands. Suddenly a flash of light from a humongous gold ring on the executioner's right pinky almost blinds me.

MRS. BUNCE: You may be here in body, but your **head** is a different matter.

End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

MARRUCI: *(Gets up. As he passes HUBIE's desk he sees the cartoon.)* You'd better get rid of that obscene drawing of Mrs. Bunce before she sees it. *(From the trash can he picks up HUBIE'S wadded up math paper.)* Hey, everybody! Look what I found in the trash can. Why, it's **Hu**-bert's math test. And he got a whole thirty-

HUBIE: Give it back!

MARRUCI tosses it into the trash and the boys struggle over the trash can. HUBIE, finally getting the can away from MARRUCI, trips spilling the contents everywhere just as MRS. BUNCE enters. MARRUCI, now back at his seat, grins.

MRS. BUNCE: What on earth!

HUBIE: It-it's not what you think, Mrs. Bunce. I tripped. (*He starts picking up the trash.*)

MRS. BUNCE: You shouldn't have been out of your seat in the first place. You know the rules, Hubert. I'll see **you** after school.

SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Students are leaving.

FRANK: It's not fair you got the blame.

HUBIE: That's the last time Marruci sticks it to me.

DREAM SEQUENCE 2

RING ANNOUNCER: Coming to you straight from Madison Square Garden . . . **the fight of the century!** The whole world is waiting breathlessly to see if Boom Boom has the guts to wipe that smirk off Marruci's face for good.

Blackout. End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

SCENE 3

SETTING: *Hartzel family room and HUBIE'S bedroom.*

HUBIE: I'm home. What's to eat? (*Drops his backpack on the floor. Looks offstage.*) Oh, boy, apple pie.

He exits and soon returns with a pie tin. He's taking a bite when he steps on FRED FERKLE's tail. FRED, who is behind the couch, yowls and HUBIE drops the pie tin.

Geeze, Fred Ferkle, I didn't mean to step on your tail.

MRS. HARTZEL: (*Enters.*) Hubert Claude Hartzel, **what** is going on in here?

HUBIE: Nothin', Ma... Oh, you mean the pie? It just sorta accidentally fell. I'm taking care of it right now.

MRS. HARTZEL exits as BRENDA enters.

BRENDA: Whoa. I must've walked into the wrong house. That can't be **my** kid brother, the dirt freak, actually cleaning up.

HUBIE: You're not so hot yourself, Brenda. Not with zits that look like cities on a road map all over your face.

BRENDA: Look who's talking. Mom has to buy all **your** clothes in the husky – as in **fat** – boys department.

HUBIE: You're always making fun of my weight.

BRENDA: Fat... fat... **FAT!**

HUBIE: You need to shave your face, **Brenda**.

BRENDA: I'm going to tell Mom.

HUBIE: I'm going to tell her!

BRENDA: **MOTHER!**

HUBIE: **MAAAAA!**

MRS. HARTZEL: *(Enters.)* That's enough from both of you. Honestly, I can't leave for two minutes without the two of you arguing.

MR. HARTZEL: *(Enters wearing a collared shirt, slacks and carrying a briefcase.)* Hello, my little chickadees! What's for dinner?

MRS. HARTZEL: Meatloaf.

HUBIE: **Again?**

BRENDA: What's up with that old cat, anyway? He just walked into that table leg. He's been acting really weird lately. And look at his fur. He's more like a big hairball than a cat. *(Exits.)*

MR. HARTZEL: Sometimes it's best to put a sick animal out of its misery.

HUBIE: Noooo! We can't ever do that to Fred! *(Hugs FRED.)*

DREAM SEQUENCE 3

FRED FERKLE: **Yowl... Mental abuse!** Talk like that would make any feline sick and miserable.

ALTER EGO: Don't worry, Fred.

FRED FERKLE: That lynch mob over there headed up by your father is ready to tighten the hangman's noose around my neck. And you say, '**Don't worry?**'

ALTER EGO: I won't let them. **I swear...**

End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

MR. HARTZEL: Look, all I meant was that sometime we might have to consider the possibility. I know this is hard on you, Hubie—on all of us, but poor ole Fred can't be comfortable the way he is.

HUBIE: *(To FRED.)* Don't worry, ole buddy. You can count on me.

MRS. HARTZEL: Hubie, can you take Fred to your room? I don't want him underfoot while I make dinner.

HUBIE: Come on, Fred Ferkle. At least nobody can bug us there.

HUBIE goes to his room and puts FRED on the floor beside his desk. Takes out a sheet of paper and begins to draw.

DREAM SEQUENCE 4

RING ANNOUNCER: Boom Boom is dancing around Marruci. There it is, folks! Boom Boom's famous left-right combination. Marruci tries to back off, but Boom Boom slams him with an uppercut. Before Marruci has a chance to recover, Boom Boom flattens Marruci's face with a right hook. Marruci is stunned! He can't stay on his feet much longer. The crowd is going wild!

CROWD: Boom Boom, Boom Boom, Boom Boom . . .

End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

MRS. HARTZEL: *(Sound of the crowd still echoing as she calls offstage.)* Hubie? ...Hubie! *(She enters.)* Why didn't you answer when I called? I just want you to know that I have a three-o'clock appointment with Mrs. Bunce tomorrow. *(Exits.)*

HUBIE: *(Crumples up his drawing.)* Life stinks.

Blackout.

SCENE 4

SETTING: *Next day, art class.*

AT RISE: *Background voices. LANA SLOMONSKY enters.*

FRANK: Wow, Miss Slomonsky is hot.

HUBIE: Yeah.

LANA SLOMONSKY: All right everyone, settle down. I'll be assigning seats after roll call. Raise your hand when I read off your name.

MARRUCI: Mrs. Harrison let us sit anywhere we wanted. We **never** had assigned seats.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Your name?

MARRUCI: Ralph Marruci

LANA SLOMONSKY: Well, Ralph Marruci, you can be the first to take your seat right over there. *(She looks again at the list in her hand and calls.)* Shelly Hoff?

SHELLY raises her hand.

Hubert Hartzel?

HUBIE is staring at LANA SLOMONSKY, his mouth agape.

Hubert Hartzel?

FRANK gives him a nudge.

HUBIE: Huh?

LANA SLOMONSKY: You're supposed to raise your hand for roll call.

MARRUCI: Yeah, pay attention, **Hu**-bert.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Let's have it quiet back there.

When she looks down for the next name, MARRUCI throws a giant spitwad at HUBIE. He misses and it flies past LANA SLOMONSKY. She glares at MARRUCI.

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(Continued.)* I only give one warning. Next time you go straight to the principal's office.

SFX: SCHOOL BELL RINGS. Students start to leave.

HUBIE: Hey, Frank. I think I'm going to like art class.

Blackout.

SCENE 5

SETTING: *Hartzel family room and HUBIE'S bedroom.*

AT RISE: *MR. HARTZEL enters, newspaper in hand, and sits on the couch. HUBIE enters.*

HUBIE: Mom said you wanted to talk with me.

MR. HARTZEL: Sit down, Hubie.

HUBIE: If it's about me and Frank riding our bikes over to his cousin's,
|—

MR. HARTZEL: You telling me you boys rode on that main highway?
When you've been told **not** to?

HUBIE: We were extra careful.

MR. HARTZEL: Careful doesn't cut it, Hubie.

HUBIE: What about the time Grandma Hartzel caught you riding your
bike to school with Uncle Dick on the back fender?

MR. HARTZEL: My own mother ratted on me. Look, that was a really,
really dumb thing I did. And dangerous. Did your grandma also tell
you they took away my bike for a whole month? Dickie was only
seven. But I was old enough to know better. So are you, Hubie.

HUBIE: I know.

MR. HARTZEL: And?

HUBIE: I won't do it again.

MR. HARTZEL starts to get up.

Dad? That isn't what you planned to talk with me about. Is it?

MR. HARTZEL: Mrs. Bunce told your mother today that you haven't
been handing in all your math and English assignments. She said
you've been drawing cartoons and daydreaming in class. And then

yesterday you failed a unit math test. (*Beat.*) So what's the problem?

HUBIE: Math is boring.

MR. HARTZEL: I suppose English is boring too. Okay, so you're not crazy about English and math. But do you really like sixth grade so much you'd rather spend another year there while all your friends go on?

HUBIE is fiddling with his cell phone. MR. HARTZEL takes away the phone.

Well?

HUBIE shakes his head.

In that case, you'd better spend more time studying and getting **all** your homework done—on time.

HUBIE: I'll try harder, Dad. Honest.

MR. HARTZEL: I'm glad to hear it. (*Stands up.*) Tell you what, Hubie, if your mother and I hear that your grades are improving and you're getting all your homework handed in, you can have a friend sleep over twice a month.

HUBIE: I'll do my homework right now! (*Before leaving he picks up FRED.*)

MR. HARTZEL: Good. When you're done, bring your homework to me.

HUBIE: (*HUBIE carries the cat to his room where he puts FRED on the floor beside his desk. He takes a book from his backpack, then glances at FRED.*) Hey, Fred, you might as well get after me too. Everybody else has. (*HUBIE nudges FRED.*) Come on, I can take it. (*FRED doesn't move.*) Wake up you lazy ole cat. (*Beat.*) How come you're not mov—Holy Toledo! Fred's dying... **he's dyyyyyiiiiiiiing!** (*Runs with FRED into the family room.*)

MRS. HARTZEL: (*Enters.*) Calm down, Hubie. Here, let me take look.
(*She examines FRED.*) Get me a towel.

HUBIE returns with a towel. MRS. HARTZEL wraps FRED in it.

We'll try to make Fred as comfortable as we—

HUBIE: You sound just like Dad! You're going to let him die, aren't you... **aren't you?**

MRS. HARTZEL: That's **not** what I was going to say.

HUBIE: Then you'll take him to the vet?

MRS. HARTZEL: Of course we will.

HUBIE: I knew I could count on you, Ma.

MR. HARTZEL enters holding the newspaper. Behind him is BRENDA.

MR. HARTZEL: What's going on?

MRS. HARTZEL: Something's definitely wrong with Fred. I think we should take him to the vet.

MR. HARTZEL: It's late, Gloria. I'll take him first thing in the morning.

HUBIE: If we wait till then he'll die for sure.

BRENDA: Why get upset over a sixteen-year old hairball, anyway?

HUBIE: I hate you, Brenda Hartzel. You're the meanest, rottenest—

MR. HARTZEL: **That's enough from both of you!**

BRENDA exits.

HUBIE: Ma!

MRS. HARTZEL tilts her head as she looks at MR. HARTZEL. Beat.

MR. HARTZEL: All right, all right. I'm going. (*He puts on a jacket.*)

MRS. HARTZEL: I'll call Dr. Danielson's emergency number and let them know you're on your way.

She hands FRED to MR. HARTZEL and exits.

HUBIE: Can I go too?

MR. HARTZEL: It's better you stay here and finish your homework.

HUBIE: But, **Dad**—

MR. HARTZEL: I'll take good care of him, Hubie. You don't have to worry about that.

HUBIE: Then you won't let them put Fred away. **Promise** me you won't.

MR. HARTZEL: I promise. *(He exits.)*

HUBIE goes to his desk and puts his head down. Light slowly fades into dusk. MR. HARTZEL enters. Gently awakens HUBIE.

HUBIE: Is Fred going to be okay?

MR. HARTZEL: It's pneumonia.

HUBIE: But he'll be okay... won't he?

MR. HARTZEL: I'd hoped to give you better news. *(Long beat.)* I don't think he's going to make it. I'm sorry, Hubie. *(Exits.)*

DREAM SEQUENCE 5

MOURNER: Fred Ferkle looks so peaceful lying in his tiny wooden coffin... with those dear little paws crossed over his heart.

ALTER EGO: Yes, he does. *(Long sigh.)*

MOURNER: You'd never know he suffered as much as he did.

ALTER EGO: Why oh why did I let Fred suffer for sooo long?

MOURNER: Now, now, don't take it too hard. After all, Fred did live a long life.

Blackout. End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

SCENE 6

SETTING: Art class and school hallway.

AT RISE: Students are at their desks working on their drawings. FRANK goes over to HUBIE and looks at his drawing.

FRANK: Hey, that looks like Fred Ferkle... you heard anything from the vet?

HUBIE: No, nothing. He's been gone almost a week. *(Beat.)* Maybe Fred died and they haven't gotten around to telling us yet.

FRANK: Naw, they'd tell ya, Hubie. Besides, my mom says, 'No news is good news.'

LANA SLOMONSKY enters carrying a box of art supplies.

Oh-oh, here comes Miss Slomonsky. *(He hurries to his seat.)*

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(She puts the box down and starts looking over other students' drawings before going over to HUBIE.)* You certainly have the right idea. *(She shows his drawing to the class.)* Look here, everyone. See how the two rows of trees and the building are in perspective? Hubie has drawn it exactly the way I showed you.

MARRUCI: So big deal.

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(She hands the drawing back.)* The cat is a nice touch.

HUBIE blushes.

Do you draw much?

HUBIE: I guess so. My mother is always complaining because I leave my drawings all over the house.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Sounds like what you could use is an artist's sketchpad. Hmm... come to think of it, I have an extra one you can have. *(She gets it from the box and hands it to him.)*

HUBIE: Gee, thanks, Miss Slomonsky.

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(To everyone.)* We have only four minutes left in class. Just enough time to finish up. Make sure you put your name on your drawing before you hand it in. *(She picks up the box.)* I'm just going across the hall to drop these off. I'll be right back.

HUBIE: Do you need some help, Miss Slomonsky?

LANA SLOMONSKY: Looks like I can use it. Here, take this and follow me. *(Beat. Smiles at him. They take the box to a shelf or cart in the school hallway.)* Thanks, Hubie.

ALTER EGO: Suddenly, Lana is in my arms.

LANA SLOMONSKY: I noticed you that very first day, Hubie. I couldn't keep my eyes off you.

ALTER EGO: I didn't know you felt the same, Lana.

End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Hubie?

HUBIE: Huh?

LANA SLOMONSKY: We can go back now.

HUBIE follows her back to the classroom when the bell rings. HUBIE grabs his backpack to leave. Everyone has left except for HUBIE, FRANK, and MARRUCI.

FRANK: Who would've figured you for a teacher's pet.

HUBIE: What are you talking about? Mrs. Bunce **hates** me.

FRANK: Not **her**, Miss Slomonsky. Your drawing was the only one she showed off like it was some kind of masterpiece. And another thing, who'd she give the sketchpad too? Huh? Yup, I'd say you're the new art teacher's pet all right.

MARRUCI: Yo, this area is for sixth graders. Kindergarten is on the first floor. *(Laughs.)*

HUBIE: In that case, you belong at home in your playpen.

MARRUCI bumps into HUBIE making him fall. MRS. BUNCE enters holding up HUBIE's drawing of her as an executioner.

DREAM SEQUENCE 7

ALTER EGO: The moving ax crunches through skin and bone. Blood gushes out, forming a crimson waterfall as my head drops to the ground. When it rolls over I see the rest of my body still propped up on my knees.

MRS. BUNCE: That takes care of ten pounds of ugly fat! Heh, heh, heh...

End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

MRS. BUNCE: Since you seem to have misplaced this, Hubert, I'm returning it. *(Hands the drawing to HUBIE and exits.)*

MARRUCI sticks out his foot and trips HUBIE.

HUBIE: You tripped me on purpose!

MARRUCI: So what are ya gonna do about it, **Hu**-bert?

DREAM SEQUENCE 8

RING ANNOUNCER: Boom Boom is down! It was Marruci's right to the head that got him. *(Crowd roaring.)*

REFEREE: One... two... three... four...

RING ANNOUNCER: What's this? *(Beat.)* Boom Boom is struggling to get up. Will he make it in time?

Blackout. End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

SCENE 7

SETTING: *School hallway, end of the school day. HUBIE and FRANK are getting ready to leave.*

HUBIE: It had to be Marruci who set me up. This time I'm **really** gonna get even.

FRANK: Yeah, right! There's just one itty bitty problem. **How.** *(Beat.)* I know what! If you and me ambush Marruci we could beat up the—

HUBIE: Are you crazy? While he's pinning you to the ground, he'd be whipping me into Jell-O pudding.

FRANK: Whatever happened to your bodybuilding program?

HUBIE: Look, even if we did beat him up, you know how my dad feels about fighting.

FRANK: Yeah. Your old man has funny ideas.

HUBIE: We've got to come up with something good – **really** good.

FRANK: Speaking of the jerk himself. *(Nods toward someone off stage.)* Look who's walking with Shelly Hoff.

HUBIE: Yeah, I've noticed he's been hanging around her a lot.

FRANK: Marruci won't much longer. Beth told me yesterday that Shelly and her family are moving.

HUBIE: Break my heart. *(Beat. Snaps his fingers.)* I got it, Frank!

FRANK: Got what?

HUBIE: How to get back at Marruci. It's the perfect scheme. And I've come up with a name too—Operation Harassment. But first me an' you have to figure out the details.

Blackout.

SCENE 8

SETTING: *Same day after school; Hartzel family room.*

AT RISE: *FRED FERKLE is unseen behind the couch.*

HUBIE: *(Enters.)* Holy Toledo! Is that really you, Fred Ferkle?

SFX: *CAT MEOWS. HUBIE picks up the cat now wearing a "cone" or e-collar.*

What did the vet do... give you a whole body buzz? At least nobody can accuse you of looking like a hairball anymore.

MRS. HARTZEL: *(Enters.)* Here we thought Fred Ferkle had used up all nine lives. Looks like he had a spare.

HUBIE: When did you pick him up?

MRS. HARTZEL: On my way home from the work. He's on medication and still very weak. We have to be careful handling him.

HUBIE: I know, Ma.

Holding the cat, he sits down on the couch. MRS. HARTZEL exits.

HUBIE: *(Continued.)* Hey, ol' buddy. You know this saying about smarties like us? One smart fella, he felt smart; two smart fellas, they felt smart; three smart fellas, they felt smart, four smart fellas they smelled fart. *(Laughs. Then takes out his cellphone and calls FRANK.)* Hey, Frank. You'll never guess who's here. *(Beat.)* Nope,

Fred Ferkle. (*Beat.*) Yup. You heard right. My mom picked him up after work. Fred's practically bald and so skinny he looks like a walking toothpick, but he's **ALIVE!** (*Beat.*) Yeah, me too. Hey, is Saturday still on? (*Beat.*) Good. See ya at my place.

Blackout.

SCENE 9

SETTING: *Hartzel family room, the following Saturday.*

AT RISE: *HUBIE is lying on the couch when MRS. HARTZEL enters.*

MRS. HARTZEL: Why haven't you cleaned up your bedroom? (*Beat.*) Don't give me that look, young man.

HUBIE: I already told you, Ma, Frank's coming over this morning. Besides, how come I have to clean my room and Brenda gets away with staying in bed all day?

MRS. HARTZEL: She's not feeling well.

HUBIE: I'm not feeling so good either. (*Coughs.*)

MRS. HARTZEL: I know what, Hubie. Pretend you've claimed enemy turf. And you're clearing your bedroom of booby traps.

HUBIE: Not funny, Ma. Besides, I don't make any messes.

MRS. HARTZEL: Are you saying the trail of crumbs that leads directly to your bed were left by an Oreo-eating cookie monster?

HUBIE: Guess he must've found your secret stash again.

MRS. HARTZEL: Humph! I think you'd better get yourself a veggie eating monster.

Doorbell rings.

That must be the carpet layers. Hubie, will you let Fred out? I don't want him around while they're working.

HUBIE: Come on, Fred Ferkle.

HUBIE, carrying FRED, opens the door. SFX: DOG BARKING OFFSTAGE. SFX: CAT SNARLING.

Stop digging your claws into me. It's only Moose. He's more bark than anything. You're safe so long as you stay on the porch.

Blackout.

SCENE 10

SETTING: HUBIE's bedroom.

FRANK: You wanna read your draft first?

HUBIE: Naw, you start. *(Sits at his desk.)*

FRANK: *(He clears his throat.)* Okay, here goes. *(Another long throat clearing.)*

HUBIE: For Pete's sake! Just **read** it.

FRANK: *(With a falsetto voice, he reads while sashaying around the room with one hand on his hip.)* Dear Ralph. I just **adore** boys like you. Big, strong, and handsome with a terrible... ahem... I mean, a **terrific** sense of humor. And you have plenty of that!

HUBIE is laughing while FRANK continues to prance around the room.

I **must** see you after baton practice today in front of Mrs. Wiggins' room. I'll be there at four sharp waiting for you. This is our last chance to be together. Just the two of us. *(Beat.)* **Alone**. But let's keep it our very own little secret. Don't mention this to anyone. Not even each other. Our hearts throb... *(Normal voice.)* How do you like 'throb'? Better than 'beat,' don't ya think, Hubie?

HUBIE: Yeah, it really grabs me.

FRANK: Ahem. *(Falsetto.)* Our hearts throb as one. P.S. I can't **wait** till four o'clock.

HUBIE: Oh, sick. It's so disgusting it's perfect!

FRANK: Do you think we should add a pair of red lip prints at the bottom?

HUBIE: That's better yet. When Marruci lays eyes on this he'll be panting all the way to Wiggins' room.

FRANK: Now it's your turn.

FRANK shoves HUBIE off the chair and sits down.

HUBIE: *(Using a macho voice.)* Hey, Shelly, baby. You lucked out when I chose you to meet me in front of Old Lady Wiggins' room today after baton practice. I always had a thing for curly, short-haired blonds. Why don't you cut your hair? I think it would look less stringy. And I **do** love your smile. That two-inch gap between your front teeth is *sooo* cute. Don't miss the biggest opportunity of your life. Be sure to be at Wiggins' by four o'clock. But you'd better keep this to yourself. Or I'll tell everybody that you and the class geek were holding hands under the lunch table. Your Secret Admirer.

FRANK: *(Laughs.)* Did they **really**?

HUBIE: Did they what?

FRANK: You know – hold hands.

HUBIE: How should I know? I just put that in to make sure she meets him.

FRANK: So when is D Day?

HUBIE: A week from Friday. With Shelly moving that weekend the two lovebirds will never have a chance to get together and figure out who **really** wrote the letters. The timing is perfect!

DREAM SEQUENCE 9

MARRUCI: Four o'clock, the magic hour is here. Oh, how my love calls to me.

ALTER EGO: With a look of ecstasy, Marruci twirls on the tips of his ballet slippers. He pauses. Across the dance floor he sees his love.

MARRUCI: Here I come, my love, my joy.

ALTER EGO: Making a wide sweep with his arms, Marruci begins running to her, his slippers barely touching the floor. The music swells as he leaps into the air. He is descending when his Listerine smile fades. In his love's right hand is... **A DAGGER.**

Blackout. OPTIONAL INTERMISSION.

SCENE 11

SETTING: School hallway. Monday morning before class.

AT RISE: HUBIE is waiting when FRANK enters out of breath.

HUBIE: Hey, where were you? I waited at least fifteen minutes at our usual—

FRANK: Operation Harassment ran into a problem.

HUBIE: What kind of problem?

FRANK: My mom found the letters. That's why I'm late. I figured the safest place to stash 'em was my underwear drawer. How'd I know she'd do a wash this morning? I told her it was a creative writing assignment. But I don't think she believed me because she ripped them up.

HUBIE: You still have the original drafts, don't you?

FRANK: At least she didn't wash my jeans. Here, you type them!

HUBIE: You know I can't, not with my mother watching our computer like a hawk. Besides, it might be better if we used longhand this time. You know, a personal touch.

FRANK: Yeah, **right.** It wouldn't take much to figure out who wrote them. Even a moron like Marruci could do that.

HUBIE: Not if the letters are forged.

FRANK: I don't know any good forgers.

HUBIE: I do... you and me. First we have to get samples of their writing. Marruci won't be a problem. The inside of his desk looks like a battlefield. He'd never miss one lousy paper. But Shelly would. And that's where you come in.

FRANK: Me?

HUBIE: You sit behind her in English.

FRANK: Yeah, but—

BETH: (*Enters.*) You two boys look like you're having a secret meeting.

Is that right, **Frankie**?

FRANK: (*Dreamily.*) Oh, hi, Beth. We were just talking about—

HUBIE: (*Quickly.*) Mrs. Harrison having twins.

BETH: That's been around so long nobody even talks about it anymore, Hubie. (*Turns to FRANK.*) But I'll just bet **you** have something more interesting to tell... right, Frankie?

FRANK: Ahhh, well...

HUBIE: Mrs. Harrison is expecting again... in September.

BETH: So soon?

HUBIE: Do you mean you're the **last** to know?

BETH: Of course not, I knew that last week... see you guys later.
(*Exits.*)

FRANK: (*Dreamily.*) She called me Frankie.

DREAM SEQUENCE 10

ALTER EGO: Frank, you've got to get a hold of yourself. You can't go on like this any longer. It's already ruined forty-nine years of your life. Beth married somebody else forty years ago. Face it, Frank. She's a great-grandmother. And she's fat and ugly.

FRANK: (*Dreamily.*) Beth called me Frankie.

End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

HUBIE: Earth calling Frankie. Earth calling Frankie. Are you there, Frankie?

FRANK: Shut up.

HUBIE: Let's get back to Operation Harassment. We got English last period.

FRANK: So? That's nothing new.

HUBIE: The point is you sit behind Shelly. Tell her you don't understand today's assignment. You know how girls like to show off how smart they are. Just have a paper ready and have her write on that.

FRANK: I still don't see why you can't do it.

HUBIE: I'm depending on you, Frank.

MRS. BUNCE: (*Enters.*) Why aren't you boys in class?

HUBIE: Ah, sorry, Mrs. Bunce.

Blackout.

SCENE 12

SETTING: *End of school day outside the Art Room*

HUBIE: Did you get it?

FRANK: You won't believe what I had to go through to get this stupid sample. You owe me big time.

HUBIE: How hard could it have been?

FRANK: **How hard?** Listen, when I told Shelly I didn't understand the assignment, she went on and on about prepositional phrases. I thought she'd **never** shut up!

HUBIE: Let me take a look. *(Beat.)* Wow, look at all those fancy loops. Marruci's letter will be a cinch. But Shelly's? Now that's going to be tricky. *(Turns to FRANK.)* You're better at handwriting than me. Maybe you could write Shelly's and I'll...

FRANK starts to walk away.

Hey, where are you going?

FRANK: I got the sample. Now **you** forge the letters.

HUBIE: Ah, come on, Frank. What's really bugging you?

FRANK: It had to be **my** job to get Shelly's handwriting. Now Beth thinks just because I asked Shelly about that dumb English assignment I like her instead.

HUBIE: So who cares what Beth Pringle thinks. She's just an oversize potato chip.

FRANK: Look who's talking! *(Starts walking away again and calls to someone offstage.)* Hey, Rob, you wanna come over to my place for some hoop practice? *(Exits.)*

HUBIE: *(Mimicking FRANK.)* You wanna come over to my place for some hoop practice? *(Beat.)* At least Miss Slomonsky appreciates me. *(HUBIE goes to the art room doorway.)*

HUBIE: Hi, Miss Slomonsky... ah, Coach Vincent.

COACH and LANA are offstage.

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(Offstage.)* Oh, hi, Hubie. Are you looking for me?

HUBIE: I-I brought my drawings.

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(Enters.)* I'd like to see them. Why don't you wait here. I just need a moment with coach.

LANA exits. HUBIE tries peeking inside when MISS SLOMONSKY reenters.

Okay, let's see what you have, Hubie.

HUBIE: *(Takes his sketchpad out of his backpack.)* I worked on this over the weekend. It's a covered bridge near my grandma and grandpa's.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Very well done, Hubie. And you got the perspective right. *(Beat.)* I see you have an eye for details too.

HUBIE: Thanks.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Do you have any more?

HUBIE: Just these funny faces I drew.

LANA SLOMONSKY: *(Soft laughter.)* You certainly have a knack for drawing caricature. Didn't you draw me?

HUBIE: Right here.

LANA SLOMONSKY: A portrait!

HUBIE: It's for you... to keep.

LANA SLOMONSKY: How thoughtful of you, Hubie. I can tell you put a lot of effort into it. I'll treasure this.

DREAM SEQUENCE 11

ALTER EGO: Lana takes my hands into hers.

LANA SLOMONSKY: Oh, Hubie, you are so talented. But it's your thoughtfulness I most admire about you.

ALTER EGO: And I admire you too, Lana. Everything about you. Everything...

Blackout. End of DREAM SEQUENCE.

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