

UNSOOUND EFFECTS – ONE ACT

By Christy Fredrickson

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SYNOPSIS: It's 1938, the Golden Age of Radio, but things are not so golden at radio station KTSK. Their best show, "Polly in Peril" is plummeting in the ratings thanks to Benny, their disastrous sound man who always manages to play the wrong sound at the wrong time. When a pair of burglars hole up in the station one night, it's up to an amazing combination of quick acting, perfect plotting, and highly persuasive sound effects to save the day.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(7 females, 6 males, 4-5 either; doubling possible, gender flexible)

LANA (f)	Famous voice actress. (50 lines)
JUDY (f)	Voice actress – child voices. (25 lines)
HELEN (f)	Sound effects girl. (18 lines)
LOIS (f).....	Long-suffering secretary. (11 lines)
MAVIS (f).....	Sings commercials. (11 lines)
MARTHA (f)	Sings commercials. (5 lines)
VERA (f).....	Criminal, robbed a bank. (19 lines)
HAL (m)	Voice actor, does many voices. (55 lines)
BENNY (m).....	Sound effects man, energetic but irritating. (39 lines)
GERALD (m).....	Director. Stressed out, yells. (37 lines)
LEON (m).....	Handyman who likes Lana. (34 lines)
EDDIE (m).....	Criminal, robbed a bank. (28 lines)
MR. McCONKEY (m).....	Owner of radio station. (12 lines)
DORIS/DONALD (f/m)	Script writer. (23 lines)
MR./MRS. NICHOLS (f/m)	Sponsor with no imagination. (12 lines)
POLICE OFFICER (f/m)	(2 lines)
REPORTER 1 (f/m).....	(2 lines)
REPORTER 2 (f/m).....	(2 lines)

ALL LINE COUNTS ARE APPROXIMATE

EXTRAS:

REPORTERS (f/m)

POLICE OFFICER (f/m)

DOUBLING: Directors may choose to have only one reporter. If a female plays Mrs. Nichols, she may double as Vera, but she will need a fast costume change.

TIME: 1938**PLACE:** Studio of radio station KTSK**DURATION:** 30 minutes**SET DESIGN**

There are two platforms, one up left, one up right. Each should have a microphone, if possible. On the stage left platform is a shelf or table for sound effects. In front of the stage right platform is a small table and chairs, perhaps a small booth. A sign which says "ON AIR" is lighted or held by GERALD. A set of steps may go to either platform or may simply sit alone. Up center is a freestanding prop door. Down center is a microphone marked "KTSK."

SOUND EFFECTS

- SFX 1:** CREAKY DOOR
SFX 2: DOORKNOB (*Opening*)
SFX 3: DOOR CLOSING
SFX 4: FOOTSTEPS (*Going away*)
SFX 5: NEWSPAPER (*Rustling*)
SFX 6: FOOTSTEPS (*Slow*)
SFX 7: DOORKNOB
SFX 8: CREAKY DOOR
SFX 9: WHOOPEE CUSHION
SFX 10: FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, running away*)
SFX 11: ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord*)
SFX 12: HARMONICA
SFX 13: "DING"

- SFX 14:** HORSE HOOVES (*Using two sets of coconuts*), and HARMONICA
- SFX 15:** GUNSHOTS
- SFX 16:** FOOTSTEPS (*Running*)
- SFX 17:** FOOTSTEPS (*Running*)
- SFX 18:** GUNSHOTS
- SFX 19:** RUNNING HORSES (*Using two sets of coconuts*)
- SFX 20:** KAZOO (*Funeral march*)
- SFX 21:** KAZOO STOPS
- SFX 22:** BREAKING GLASS
- SFX 23:** BREAKING GLASS
- SFX 24:** THUNDER
- SFX 25:** THUNDER (*Louder and longer*)
- SFX 26:** THUNDER
- SFX 27:** CRASH BOX, THUNDER, DRUM, etc. (*Loud and long*)
- SFX 28:** THUNDER
- SFX 29:** AS IF TURNING A DIAL (*Radio static, woman singing, etc.*)
- SFX 30:** FOOTSTEPS (*From behind shelves*)
- SFX 31:** THUNDER, CRASH BOX, DRUM, ETC. (*Loud and long*)
- SFX 32:** THUNDER
- SFX 33:** ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord*)

PROPS NEEDED FOR SFX

FOOTSTEPS: Two sets of hard-soled shoes (or footsteps may be done by actors in their own shoes)

NEWSPAPER: Newspaper

DOOR: Prop door. A door in a frame with knob or handle which opens and closes. (*If the prop door is creaky, it may be used. If needed, however, BENNY or HELEN may simply voice the sound of a creaky door*)

WHOOPEE CUSION: Whoopee cushion or an actor (Perhaps MAVIS or MARTHA) may use her mouth to make “whoopee cushion” sound. This method is often louder and more reliable than an actual Whoopee cushion.

ORGAN MUSIC (One chord): Toy keyboard

“DING”: Oven timer or triangle

RUNNING HORSES: Two coconuts, cut exactly in half

THUNDER OPTIONS: Thunder sheet* or drum or crash box**

HARMONICA: Harmonica

KAZOO: Kazoo

GUNS: Two short boards (1x4 or 2x4)

BOILING OIL: Small jar of water and drinking straw

COMICAL NOISE set to HAL'S FOOTSTEPS: Leon may use any sound effect, or HAL may keep a small noise maker in his pocket so he can match the noise to his own footsteps. This will appear as if LEON is making the noise.

*Thunder sheet is a piece of plastic or metal sheeting, at least 2' x 3'. It may hang on a framework to make the sound more authentic, but this is not strictly necessary. If metal is used, sheeting should be taped with duct tape to prevent injuries. Frameworks may be built from PVC pipe, wood or metal.

**Crash box is a metal popcorn container with rocks, bolts, broken dishes, etc. inside. The lid is duct-taped down.

PROPS CARRIED ON

- Folder full of papers, tray with coffee cups (Lois)
- Scripts (folders, etc.), pen (Doris)
- Bag of "money" (Vera)
- Keys (Gerald)
- Tool belt, hammer, short board, misc. tools, thunder sheet (Leon)
- Pistol (Eddie)

PRODUCTION NOTES

Sound effects made by "sound effects" actors on stage are denoted by the following in the script: SFX colon, then the sound effect (i.e. **SFX: THUNDER**). Regular sound/light and stage directions are indicated by italics.

When HAL, BENNY and LANA hide to thwart the thieves, they may put SFX microphone down near them so that their voices and other sound effects may be heard. This is especially effective for HAL's "godlike" voice.

MICROPHONES: Ideally, there should be three microphones: Center stage, stage left (SFX) platform, and stage right platform. If less than three

microphones are available, stage left (SFX platform) microphone is the most important, so the various sound effects can be heard well.

SHELVES ON STAGE LEFT (SFX) PLATFORM: If shelves are open so the audience can see through them, steps should be taken to provide a place for LANA, BENNY and HAL to hide from the criminals. Lots of items, even if not used, can be piled on the shelves, or a curtain hung on the back.

HAL'S TWO VOICES: When Hal performs two different voices, he may want to move his head back and forth, doing one voice on one side of the mic, and the other voice on the other side.

HELEN and THE ONE ORGAN NOTE: It is important that Helen's voice gets higher pitched with each phrase, which builds drama. In contrast, the organ has only one note, which deflates the drama.

JAMES GANG: Directors may choose to change "James" to any name that may mean something to audience: his/her own name, the school principal, mayor, etc.

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PRODUCTION HISTORY

Unsound Effects (One Act) had its world premiere by Morrill High School, Morrill, NE (2014) with the following cast:

HAL.....Jake Hoffman
BENNY Josh Harvey
LANA.....Candice Rendon
GERALD.....Bo Magrum
JUDYSabrina Hoffman
LEONJohnny Hessler
EDDIE.....Santiago Hernandez
DONALDJacob Strecker
LOISKaitlin Howell
VERA Traci Sinner
HELEN.....Leanne Sherrod
MR. MCCONKEY Aaron Lopez
MAVISDelaney Larson
MARTHA.....Abby Sinner
MR. NICHOLS Jorge Lara
REPORTER #1..... Alexandria Jauch
REPORTER #2..... Hayley Peterson
POLICE OFFICER..... Nick Haney

STAGE CREW/TECH: Tyler Gibson, Ben Cantu, Alonzo Ayala

DIRECTOR: Niki Fredrickson

ACT ONE

AT START: Stage is dark. Curtain is closed. **BEHIND CURTAIN:** LANA, JUDY, and HAL are gathered center stage around a microphone holding scripts. BENNY and HELEN are on the SFX (sound effects) platform – stage left. GERALD and DORIS are at a table or booth stage right; GERALD is wearing headphones. MAVIS and MARTHA are on another platform, stage right. The “ON AIR” light is on, or GERALD may hold up sign that says, “ON AIR.”

JUDY: (Child’s voice, fearful.) Polly?

LANA: Shhhhh... We have to be very quiet, little one.

JUDY: (Stage whisper.) Did the bad men go away?

LANA: I don’t know. We have to hide here a little longer.

JUDY: I don’t like the dark...

SFX 1: CREAKY DOOR

LANA: Shhhhhh!

HAL: (Voice #1.) You checked this room? (Voice #2.) I checked everywhere. (Voice #1) What about the closet? (Voice #2.) I checked the closet! They ain’t here, I tell ya! (Voice #1.) I’m goin’ outside. You stay here and keep watch.

SFX 2: DOORKNOB (Opening.)

HAL: (Voice #1.) And stay outta the booze! (Voice #2.) Yeah, yeah.

SFX 3: DOOR CLOSING

SFX 4: FOOTSTEPS (Going away.)

AT RISE: CURTAIN opens, lights up. BENNY is making footsteps sounds with shoes. HELEN is holding a glass and bottle, clinking them and pouring.

HAL: (Holding script, Voice #2.) Stay outta the booze...that’ll be the day. (Slurps, swallows, ahhh.) ...Don’t know what I’m hangin’ around for anyway, they ain’t here! We looked a hundred times! (Slurps, swallows.) Say...a newspaper. Don’t mind if I do.

SFX 5: NEWSPAPER (Rustling.)

JUDY: (Sneezes.)

HAL: (Voice #2.) Hey, what gives? Who’s in the closet?

SFX 6: FOOTSTEPS (Slow.)

SFX 7: DOORKNOB

SFX 8: CREAKY DOOR

SFX 9: WHOOPEE CUSHION

Whoopie cushion sound throws everyone into despair – throw hands up, cover eyes, shake heads, etc.

LANA: (*Flustered.*) Oh... uh... it's a uh... flat tire! The kidnappers must have a flat tire!

HAL: (*Voice #2.*) Uh...yeah! Dang! I could hear that flat tire clear in here!

JUDY: We can run for it while they fix the tire!

LANA: Yes! Run, your highness, run!

SFX 10: FOOTSTEPS (*Two sets, running away.*)

SFX 11: ORGAN MUSIC (*One chord.*)

HAL: (*Dramatic voice.*) Will Polly save the little prince, or will the kidnappers find them? Find out on tomorrow's episode of 'Polly in Peril!' And remember, when your stomach is in peril, use Soothum antacid.

MAVIS and MARTHA: (*Sing.*)

SOOTHUM...SOOTHUM

CALMS A SOUR STOMACH

SOOTHUM, SOOTHUM

QUICK HEARTBURN RELIEF!

AAHHH!

"ON AIR" light goes out.

GERALD: And cut! All right, people, that's...

LANA: (*Interrupts, furious.*) Benny, I'm going to kill you!

BENNY: It wasn't me! I didn't do it!

LANA: Who was it then? (*To HELEN.*) Was it you?

HELEN shakes her head madly. To BENNY.

You're a disgrace! (*Throws a shoe.*) You should be fired! (*Throws another shoe.*) You ruin every show!

HAL picks up LANA from behind and carries her away from BENNY.

GERALD: Lana, I've told you, you can't kill our sound man until we get a new one! Benny! What was the trouble this time?

BENNY: Someone left a Whoopee cushion on the floor! I didn't do it, I just stepped on it!

GERALD: (*Furious.*) This is live radio, Benny, L-I-V-E! There is no room for mistakes! (*Messes up hair and growls.*) All right, everybody take ten, then get back here for rehearsal.

BENNY, HELEN, MARTHA, and MAVIS exit right. HELEN exits left. HAL stands behind LANA and imitates her as she yells at GERALD.

LANA: (*Furious.*) Gerald, I swear if anybody messes up tomorrow, I'm leaving! You hear me? I shouldn't have to put up with this!

HAL flips his hair and exits right.

GERALD: Sure, Lana. It won't happen again.

LANA: That's what you said yesterday. (*Flips her hair and Exits Right.*)

JUDY: And the day before.

GERALD: Take a break, will you? Get out of here!

JUDY flips her hair, imitating LANA, exits right.

GERALD: Doris, you got tomorrow's script ready?

DORIS: Got it right here.

GERALD: You have a lot of sound effects in it?

DORIS: Let's see...car, rain, fire, creaky door...

GERALD: Take out half of them, will you?

DORIS: What? It'll ruin the story!

GERALD: Yeah. But until I get a new sound man, we have to use Benny, and I want to give him as few chances as possible to screw up.

DORIS: Well, okay...but it'll take me a bit.

GERALD: All right, we'll have a staff meeting. That should buy you 20 minutes, and it'll give me a chance to yell at everyone. (*Rolls his shoulders.*) I need to let off some steam.

DORIS: (*Scribbling on script.*) Whatever you say, boss.

DORIS and GERALD exit right, HAL enters left.

HAL: Leon? Leon, where are you?

HAL begins to walk across stage right to stage left. A comical sound – duck call, hammering, etc. – accompanies each step. He stops, it stops. He walks again, it starts again.

LEON!

LEON: (*Enters from behind prop door or SFX platform.*) Yeah?

HAL: Knock it off!

LEON: Ah, you're no fun.

HAL: Did you fix that microphone yet?

LEON: Yeah, it's fixed.

HAL: Good. Now, could you fix the speaker?

LEON: Again? (*Walks to speaker, kneels down and begins to mess with wires.*) What a piece of junk.

HAL: I know. The whole place is falling down.

LEON: I can't fix this anymore, it's shot! The only way for it to work is to hold these wires together.

HAL: Then hold the wires together! (*Very reluctantly, LEON holds wires together, gets shocked by wires. HAL does not notice.*) I can't even hear the sound effects...except the Whoopee cushion. I heard that.

LEON: (*Gets shocked.*) Everybody heard that. (*Gets shocked.*) Everybody in America.

HAL: Yeah. One of our finer moments. Thanks, Leon. (*Exits right.*)

LEON: (*Shakes himself, then mutters.*) Fix the speaker...fix the roof...fix the light... fix the faucet...

Begins to work on speaker. LANA and JUDY enter right.

LANA: Leon?

LEON holds the wires together for a long, comical “shock.”

Leon, what’s wrong with you?

LEON: *(Trying to be tough.)* Nothing! Nothing at all! *(Throws down wires and stands. Walks forward, shuddering a few times from being shocked.)* What can I do for you?

LANA: We need more sound effects.

LEON: More?

JUDY: Yeah, something that Benny can’t mess up.

LEON: Benny can mess up anything.

LANA: I know. It has to be something big...and amazing.

JUDY: Something that will help “Polly in Peril” get out of last place.

LEON: *(Disbelieving.)* You think a sound effect can do that?

LANA: We have to do something! *(Puts her hand on his arm.)* Can you do it, Leon?

LEON: *(Smiles goofily.)* I can do anything for you, Lana.

JUDY: *(Rolls her eyes.)* Oh brother.

LEON: *(Snaps his fingers.)* As a matter of fact, I have something right now!

LANA: Really?

LEON: Really. Look at this! *(Exits through prop door, rattles thunder sheet or crash box.)*

LANA and JUDY look at each other.

JUDY: That sounds like thunder!

LEON: *(Enters through prop door, carrying thunder sheet or crash box.)* Thunder... *(Rattles.)* ...and lightning! *(Pretends to work light switch.)*

LIGHT CUE: *Lights flash off and on*

LANA: *(Laughs.)* I knew it! I knew you could do it! You’re a genius!

LEON: Yep, a bloomin’ genius, that’s me!

LANA: *(Sweetly.)* No, I mean it. You’re the best. *(Smiles at LEON a moment, then glances at JUDY and backs off.)* Uh, thanks, Leon!

LANA and JUDY exit right. Leon looks longingly after LANA, then goes back to work when others enter. BENNY, MAVIS and MARTHA enter right. HELEN enters left, onto SFX platform.

BENNY: Come on, Mavis, just give it a try.

MAVIS: What do you mean, do a horse?

BENNY: Like this... *(Neighs like a horse.)* ...only better. Nobody around here can do a good horse.

HELEN: You might as well do it, he'll pester you until you do.

MAVIS: Oh well... um... *(Neighs.)*

BENNY: Ah, that's no good. How about you, Martha?

MARTHA: Don't even ask! I'm a singer, not an animal!

MARTHA moves away. LOIS enters left, writing on clipboard or pad.

BENNY: *(Imitating MARTHA.)* I'm a singer, not an animal... Hey Lois, can you do a horse?

LOIS: I tried it last week. You said my horse sounded like a duck.

HELEN: Come on, Ben, we have to get ready for rehearsal.

LOIS: Gerald wants a staff meeting before rehearsal.

HELEN: Not another one!

LOIS shrugs and exits left.

BENNY: He's going to spend 20 minutes yelling at us! That's not a meeting, it's a beating! Hey Mavis, how about a rooster?

LANA, JUDY, HAL enter right.

Ah... never mind. *(Goes to his platform.)*

GERALD enters right.

GERALD: All right, people, staff meeting! Now!

Grumbling and reluctant, everyone gathers center stage.

GERALD: (*Calmly.*) Now some of you think that a staff meeting is just a time for me to spout off. Well, people... (*Slaps table, shouts and paces, ranting.*) YOU'RE ABSOLUTELY RIGHT! What do you think this is, kindergarten? This is a LIVE radio show! We got national coverage! You mess up, they hear it in every living room in America! (*Even more upset.*) "Polly in Peril" is in last place in the ratings. How are we supposed to get new sponsors...

LOIS: (*Enters left, interrupts.*) Gerald, there's someone here to see you.

MR. MCCONKEY enters left.

GERALD: (*Facing stage right.*) No! No! No! I don't want to see anybody! Get rid of them! Throw them out!

LOIS: It's Mr. McConkey. (*Exits left.*)

GERALD: (*Freezes, turns, changes demeanor completely, is genial.*)

Mr. McConkey! What a great surprise! What can we do for you?

MR. MCCONKEY: I have big news! I got a famous new sponsor! Scrubby Tub scouring powder!

Everyone is impressed and ad-libs: "Wow, Scrubby Tub!" etc.

Scrubby Tub is ready to pay us huge bucks! It will save the station!

Everyone cheers loudly.

But...there's a catch. They hate "Polly in Peril."

Everyone reacts, insulted.

They want us to come up with a brand new show. A GOOD show, like "The Shadow" or "The Lone Ranger" or "Fibber McGee and Molly". Comedy... mystery... soap opera... whatever. They want something really high quality! (*Points at BENNY.*) With great sound effects!

Everyone groans.

BENNY: Hey!

MR. MCCONKEY: (*Angry.*) Listen, people, it's do or die, here. If we don't get this account, we'll have to sell the station!

LANA: Mr. McConkey, this is so sudden! How much time do we have?

MR. MCCONKEY: We need it tomorrow.

EVERYONE: (*Astounded.*) Tomorrow?!

MR. MCCONKEY: I just found out about it myself.

GERALD: Sir, that's impossible! We have to rehearse "Polly in Peril," and Doris has to write it up...

MR. MCCONKEY: (*Angry.*) I don't care what you have to do! Stay all night if you have to, but get us a great new show or you'll all be out of a job! Goodbye! (*Exits left.*)

MAVIS: Tomorrow! He doesn't want much, does he?

MARTHA: He might as well have said five seconds from now!

BENNY: It's over! We're sunk! We're fried! We're toast!

HELEN: Ah, Benny, don't give up so easy. Maybe we can do it if we all work together.

JUDY: Doris, how long does it take you to write a completely new show?

DORIS: (*Thinking.*) Well, if I work really hard, no breaks, no distractions (*Points at GERALD.*) ...and no rewrites... two weeks.

BENNY: It's over! We're sunk! We're fried! We're toast!

Everyone gathers hats, coats, purses, etc. and begins to exit left.

GERALD: Where do you think you're going?

HELEN: You heard the man, he wants the impossible. We're leaving.

DORIS: He probably just wants an excuse to fire us anyway. He WANTS to sell out.

Everyone continues to exit left.

GERALD: Hold it right there! (*Everyone stops.*) Get back in here right now.

MAVIS: Why should we?

GERALD: Because as of this minute, you're all still under contract. Anyone who walks out that door is fired.

DORIS: So what? We'll be fired anyway in two days.

Everyone continues to exit left.

GERALD: Probably, but right now you're still mine. (*Shouts after them.*) And if you're not afraid of being fired, try this - anyone who leaves today will forfeit their whole paycheck for the past month!

Everyone wails and comes back in.

JUDY: What's the point? We can't do a whole new show by tomorrow!

GERALD: No, we probably can't. But people, we're going to try. We're going to give it all we got. We have one chance, just ONE STINKING LOUSY CHANCE to keep our jobs. We'll work on it as long as it takes.

DORIS: But it's almost lunch time!

GERALD: No lunch. Lois! (*LOIS enters left.*) Send out for sandwiches!

Everyone begins to shout out orders: "Roast beef! Turkey! Ham!" etc.

Stop! Liverwurst for everyone!

Everyone groans. LOIS exits left.

GERALD: Now then, sit down and start thinking!

Everyone sits down around set.

What kind of show do we want to do?

DORIS: (*Jumps up as if roping a cow.*) I want to do a western!

BENNY: No westerns. Nobody can do a horse.

MARTHA: I know! A great soap opera, with lots of romance and intrigue!

HELEN: Can't do it. We don't have an organ. You can't have a soap opera without organ music.

DORIS: You have organ music, you use it every day!

HELEN: We have one chord. You can't do a soap opera with one chord.

DORIS: Why not?

HELEN and BENNY perform the following sequence.

HELEN: Benny? (*BENNY does SFX: ONE ORGAN CHORD. Helen is very dramatic, her voice is higher pitched with each phrase.*) John... (*SFX: CHORD.*) Oh, John, my love! (*SFX: CHORD.*) Please, don't leave me! (*SFX: CHORD.*) I'll have to kill myself! (*SFX: CHORD.*) No! John, no! (*SFX: CHORD.*) Help! (*SFX: CHORD.*) (*HELEN slumps over the shelves as if dead, then raises her head.*) See what I mean?

Everybody reluctantly agrees.

HAL: (*Snaps his fingers.*) I've got it! A great crime show, using real crime stories! You know, like Gangbusters!

BENNY and HELEN: NO!

HAL: Why not?

BENNY: Gangbusters has eight different sound effects in their opening sequence. Gunshots, sirens, marching feet, police whistles... They have about 40 effects in every show.

HELEN: We don't have 40 sound effects in this whole studio!

DORIS: Besides, Gangbusters is already a show about real crime stories. We can't just copy them.

MAVIS: What about something in the future, you know, like "Buck Rogers"?

Everyone agrees enthusiastically: "Hey, that's a great idea," "I like it," etc., except BENNY and HELEN who are shaking their heads.

JUDY: (*Noticing them.*) What now?

BENNY and HELEN look at each other and shrug.

HELEN: We can't do a space ship.

HAL: Oh, come on! How tough can it be?

BENNY: Fine. What does a space ship sound like?

HAL: It's big...and powerful...and sort of... (*"Flies" around, making noises like a big motor, continues through JUDY'S and DORIS'S next lines.*)

JUDY: No, that sounds like a truck! A space ship is more like... (*"Flies" around, making weird, eerie noises, continues through DORIS'S next line.*)

DORIS: No way! A space ship should sound like the wind. (*"Flies" around, making a sound like wind, but runs into HAL and JUDY. They all fall in a pile.*)

GERALD: Cut! Cut! Cut! Come on, people, we're not making progress here!

JUDY: (*Brushing herself off.*) It's Benny's fault, he doesn't have sound effects for ANYTHING!

BENNY: It's not my fault! It's the budget! They don't give us anything!

HELEN: It's true! We got some of this stuff out of a junkyard! Look at this— (*Holds up two short wooden boards.*) This is a gun. (*Claps wood together.*)

BENNY: (*Holds up coconuts.*) And this is a horse. (*Clops coconuts together.*)

DORIS: I thought you said you didn't have a horse!

BENNY: This horse is walking. We don't have a whinnying horse.

HELEN: Right. And remember last week when Polly was about to get boiled in oil? The boiling went on for four and a half minutes!

DORIS: So?

HELEN: So here's the boiling oil. (*Puts straw into jar of water and blows.*) You try blowing through a straw, non-stop, for four and a half minutes.

BENNY: We almost passed out.

DORIS: So that's why you threw that shoe at me.

HELEN: No, that was for the steps.

DORIS: Steps?

BENNY: You had the bad guys running up three flights of steps... (*Races up and down steps several times.*) ...up, down, up, down...when I got home that night I wanted to boil **you** in oil!

LOIS enters with tray and coffee cups.

DORIS: Well, excuse me for writing an action-packed show!

LOIS: May I make a suggestion?

GERALD: Shoot.

LOIS: We have guns and walking horses. Why can't we do a western after all?

BENNY: As long as the horses don't say anything! All they can do is walk... *(Clops coconut shells slowly.)* ...or run! *(Clops coconut shells quickly.)*

GERALD: All right, then, let's do it!

DORIS: Yeehaw! We're gonna write us a western!

LIGHT CUE: Lights dim.

SOUND CUE: Clock ticking.

Slowly, everyone moves into different poses, different positions. Some are asleep, others look very bored except LANA, who is standing, center stage, and HAL, who is sitting with his feet up, writing a script.

HAL: So what happens when they catch up with the horse thieves?

LANA: *(Pantomimes shooting.)* They have a shoot-out. Bang! Bang! *(Blows on finger.)* Uh... Benny, Helen... shoot-out? Hey! *(Makes loud noise with prop or bangs on table.)* Wake up you schmucks! I'm not going to do this alone!

JUDY: Why not? You don't listen to any of us.

LANA: Come up with a good idea and I will.

JUDY: Yeah? What makes you think you're so great—?

LOIS: *(Runs in left holding file folder, but drops it, scattering papers, and speaks as she picks them up.)* They're here! Hurry, everybody, they're here! They're early!

GERALD: Who's here?

LOIS: Mr. McConkey and the man from Scrubby Tub! They're in the parking lot!

EVERYONE: WHAT?!

JUDY: They said we had till tomorrow!

GERALD: Well, I guess they lied! *(Begins to help people up or kicks them into action.)* Come on, everyone, get moving! Places! Sound check! Scripts! Hurry up people! Move it! Move it! Move it!

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