

GET A CLUE!

By Megan Orr

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GET A CLUE!

A Full-Length Mystery

By Megan Orr

SYNOPSIS: It's moments before the ribbon cutting for the opening of the new Lakewood Middle School gymnasium when the unimaginable happens—Beloved Principal Black has disappeared! Now the student leadership committee needs to play detective in order to figure out what has happened—is this a kidnapping or murder?! With characters reminiscent of the classic game *Clue*, this junior-edition mystery allows the entire audience to get involved in solving whodunit.

DURATION: 80 minutes

TIME: Present day; late October; Friday evening

SETTING: Lakewood Middle School

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(8-10 females, 3 males, 3-13 either; extras)

VICE PRINCIPAL

CHARLOTTE GREY (f) Vice principal and disciplinarian at Lakewood Middle School; stern, uptight, fussy, strict, no-nonsense. *(116 lines)*

JIMMY PEACOCK (m) Athletic department student representative; captain of the basketball team; an outspoken jokester who is more intelligent than he seems. *(203 lines)*

COACH MUSTARD (m) Basketball and baseball coach at Lakewood Middle School; a well-loved, jocular coach but a drill sergeant of a PE teacher. *(181 lines)*

VIOLET VERONA (f).....	Student-body president; confident, efficient, organized, a natural leader; strongly dislikes Gus Green, who nearly defeated her in the election for student body president. <i>(152 lines)</i>
SCARLETT STARR (f).....	Social committee student representative and captain of the cheerleading team; perky, bubbly, but not too bright; has a huge crush on Jimmy. <i>(96 lines)</i>
PENELOPE PLUM (f).....	Academic student representative; Academic Bowl captain and Science Club president; bookish, intelligent, and perfectionistic; at times, somewhat snide. <i>(86 lines)</i>
ARMANDO/AMANDA	
AMARILLO (m/f)	Foreign Language Club representative; foreign exchange student; speaks Spanish; eager to learn; a story teller; charming. <i>(100 lines)</i>
ROSE RODRIGUEZ (f)	Sunshine Service Club student representative; painfully shy; best friend and confidant of Violet. <i>(30 lines)</i>
GUS GREEN (m).....	Ecology Club representative; confident, outspoken, sarcastic, and opinionated; looks somewhat like a hipster and Violet's nemesis. <i>(138 lines)</i>
PRINCIPAL BLACK (m/f)	Or special guest appearance by your school's principal! <i>(4 lines)</i>

POWDER PUFF FOOTBALL GIRLS (f)

POWDER PUFF 1 (f) (12 lines)

POWDER PUFF 2 (f) (2 lines)

POWDER PUFF 3 (f) (2 lines)

POWDER PUFF 4 (f) (1 line)

POWDER PUFF 5 (f) (1 line)

SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS (m/f)

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1 (m/f)..... (5 lines)

SUNSHINE MEMBER 2 (m/f)..... (2 lines)

SUNSHINE MEMBER 3 (m/f)..... (3 lines)

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLUB MEMBERS (m/f)

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1 (m/f)..... (18 lines)

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2 (m/f)..... (7 lines)

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3 (m/f)..... (10 lines)

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4 (m/f)..... (9 lines)

SCIENCE CLUB MEMBERS (m/f)

SCIENCE CLUB MEMBER 1 (m/f) Simone/Simon. (41 lines)

SCIENCE CLUB MEMBER 2 (m/f) (11 lines)

SCIENCE CLUB MEMBER 3 (m/f) (4 lines)

SCIENCE CLUB MEMBER 4 (m/f) (3 lines)

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

The POWDER PUFF GIRLS and ALL CLUB MEMBERS can be played by a minimum ensemble cast of four actors/actresses (3 female, 1 either.) With this minimum doubling, the POWDER PUFF GIRLS can be reduced to three actresses (distributing the extra lines as the director sees fit.)

COSTUMES

VICE PRINCIPAL CHARLOTTE GREY – stuffy business suit or button-down blouse, pencil skirt, and sensible heels

JIMMY PEACOCK – in style athletic attire and sneakers

COACH (COLONEL) MUSTARD – tracksuit or jeans with polo shirt; sneakers

VIOLET VERONA – stylish but professionally “presidential;” a conservative dress or skirt and blouse, for example

SCARLETT STARR – cheerleading uniform and tennis shoes

PENELOPE PLUM – stuffy and professional; examples: tweed, turtleneck, button-down blouse, button-down cardigan, long skirt, “sensible” shoes

ARMANDO (or AMANDA) AMARILLO – either a Foreign Language Club T-shirt with a leather jacket and jeans; or colorful, cultural attire

ROSE RODRIGUEZ – a casual, loose-flowing dress in muted colors; nothing showy; may also include a sweater, denim jacket, or cardigan, sandals or dress shoes

GUS GREEN – trendy, hipster t-shirt and jeans, in-style shoes; stylish glasses, optional

PRINCIPAL BLACK – professional business attire

POWDER PUFF FOOTBALL GIRLS – football jerseys and either jeans or leggings with sneakers

SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS – t-shirts, jeans, and sneakers; nothing showy. One club member has braids, one has glasses, and one is wearing a “dumb t-shirt.”

FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLUB MEMBERS – matching Foreign Language Club T-shirts, jeans, and sneakers

SCIENCE CLUB MEMBERS – white lab coats over drab but professional attire, much like PLUM: tweed, turtlenecks, button-down shirts, button-down cardigans, long skirts or khaki pants, “sensible” shoes

SET

All scenes can occur with or without sets. In the script, a few key props are used to suggest the set. Suggestions for each have been included below:

SCENE 1: Gymnasium: Ribbon cutting ceremony, a podium and microphone at center stage

SCENE 2: Principal Black's Office, a desk at center stage, a couple overturned chairs, books and papers scattered across the floor

SCENE 3: Back Side of the Gymnasium, a piece of athletic equipment at downstage right like a basketball rack, jump rope rack, or dumbbell rack

SCENE 4: Cafeteria, two lunch tables at center stage

SCENE 5: Locker Room, one bench at center stage; articles of athletic clothing, a duffel bag, an empty pizza box, food wrappers, and a basketball scattered across the floor

SCENE 6: World Languages Classroom, student desks forming a circle at center stage

SCENE 7: Science Lab, lab station (may use a table) covered in test tubes and beakers with trash can at the end

SCENE 8: Band Room, a few collapsible music stands, instruments, and instrument cases

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

GENERAL NOTES: Feel free to adjust “Lakewood Middle School” and mascot “Lions” to fit your school name and mascot.

LIGHTS: Standard indoor lighting can be used throughout. Lights fade and rise between scenes. If available, a spot may be used for scenes in which characters run through the audience.

SCENE 1:

- Make sure to plan on having a few student “hecklers” seated in the front row of the audience to make fun of Coach Mustard. The hecklers can also be the ones to make a commotion when Vice Principal Grey reenters toward the auditorium toward the end of the scene.
- If available, you may want to consider using a lapel microphone for Rose Rodriguez, since she is the most soft-spoken character.

- When Jimmy writes on his arm in “permanent marker,” I would recommend using black eyeliner so that it can be washed off after the show.

SCENES 2-3:

- No need to create an actual paint trail from the principal's office to the gymnasium or to make Jimmy's shoes actually track in paint; better left to the imagination (cleaner too!)
- Make sure to choose Powder Puffs with powerful voices! Or give them megaphones since they will need to be heard shouting from the back of the house.

SCENE 4:

- Even though the script says the music is optional, if at all possible, try to use “I’m Walking on Sunshine” to start and end this scene. (It makes more sense when Violet comments that “it looks like fun.”)
- If you end up giving Rose Rodriguez a lapel microphone, make sure for her “whispered conversation” with the Sunshine Club member that she only lip-synchs a whispered conversation.

SCENE 5:

- It's helpful to have a stage crew member waiting in the stage right wings with the broom and dustpan to hand to Coach Mustard when he reaches into the “closet.”

SCENE 8:

- I highly recommend getting your school principal on stage during this scene for a cameo appearance as Principal Black! The students and faculty in the audience will love it!

AUDIENCE CLUE CARD

For additional audience interaction, a Clue-like game card may be included in audience programs. Feel free to design as you wish. Below is a sample:

Suspect	Location	Object
Vice Principal Grey	Principal's Office	Cafeteria lunch tray
Jimmy Peacock	Gymnasium	Black spray paint
Coach Mustard	Cafeteria	Baseball bat
Violet Verona	World Languages Classroom	Spanish book
Scarlett Starr	Locker Room	Stinky sock
Penelope Plum	Science Lab	Chloroform
Armando Amarillo	Band Room	[Musical instrument] case
Rose Rodriguez		
Gus Green		

PROPS**SCENE 1:**

- ☐ Microphone
- ☐ clipboard

SCENE 2:

- ☐ books and papers
- ☐ cafeteria tray

SCENE 3:

- ☐ Powder Puff protest signs
- ☐ baseball bat

SCENE 4:

- ☐ brown bags
- ☐ canned goods
- ☐ Spanish book

SCENE 5:

- ☐ duffel bag
- ☐ articles of athletic clothing
- ☐ empty pizza box
- ☐ food wrappers
- ☐ basketball
- ☐ broom and dustpan
- ☐ one athletic sock

SCENE 6:

- ☐ bag of tortilla chips
- ☐ musical instrument case

SCENE 7:

- ☐ test tubes
- ☐ beakers
- ☐ food-colored water
- ☐ tongs
- ☐ trash can

SCENE 8:

- ☐ collapsible music stands
- ☐ instruments
- ☐ instrument cases

SCENE 1**GYMNASIUM; RIBBON CUTTING CEREMONY**

AT START: *Lights up on center stage. VICE PRINCIPAL GREY speaks into a microphone directly to the audience.*

GREY: Excuse me, excuse me. May I have your attention, please? Good afternoon. Now, I know we're all very excited for the grand opening of our brand new multipurpose facility—

JIMMY: *(Shouting from his seat in the audience.)* "Multipurpose facility?!" It's a gym!

GREY: Young man, I will not have you interrupting our assembly! *(Collecting herself; to the audience.)* Besides, it's not a gym. It's a *gymnatorium*.

JIMMY: "Gymnatorium?!" That's not even a word!

GREY: JIMMY PEACOCK! I know that's you! If I hear one more word of nonsense out of you—

JIMMY: Like "gymnatorium?"

GREY: That's it! That's IT! I have HAD it! *(Over her shoulder, tightly.)* Coach Mustard! If you would be so kind as to take over from here...

MUSTARD: *(Entering from stage right and taking the microphone from GREY.)* Oh! Uh, of course, Vice Principal Grey. Of course.

GREY: JIMMY!!!

GREY storms off the stage toward the audience. JIMMY jumps up from his seat and runs out of the auditorium.

MUSTARD: *(Calling after JIMMY.)* Whoa there, Peacock! Watch those sprints. I don't need you pulling a hammy before the first game of the season! *(To the audience.)* Uh, I apologize for the disturbance, ladies and gentlemen. Now... where were we? Oh, right. *(In a sports announcer's voice.)* Ladies and gentlemen! Boys and girls! Welcome to the brand new Lion's Den, home of the Lakewood Middle School Lions!

Raucous applause from the audience.

MUSTARD: I'm Coach Mustard, but most of you around here know me as the Colonel.

Hoots from a large group of STUDENT fans in the audience; one yells "We love chicken!"

MUSTARD: *(To the hecklers, deadly serious.)* Hey! I told you. Not that colonel. *(To the audience.)* Now, I know we here in the community of Lakewood have been waiting a long time for this renovation. A long time. In fact, I bet some of you adults in the room joining us for tonight's assembly even bounced a basketball a time or two on our ancient planks. But no more!

VIOLET: *(Entering stage right, clipboard in hand.)* Excuse me, Coach Mustard?

MUSTARD: *(Not hearing VIOLET.)* Now when you attend our exhilarating athletic events, you'll be viewing each spectacle from the most comfortable stadium seating affordable to local middle schools.

VIOLET: Coach Mustard?

MUSTARD: You'll be able to ooh and ahh at our state-of-the-art scoreboard, specially designed for our very own Lakewood Lions.

VIOLET: Coach Mustard?

MUSTARD: And with our new sound system, you'll be able to hear even the slightest gasp of breath from our announcer with crystal clarity—

VIOLET: COLONEL!!!

MUSTARD: *(Finally turning to VIOLET.)* Ya huh?

VIOLET: Coach, you're supposed to introduce the rest of the project's student renovation committee?

MUSTARD: Oh! Right, right. My apologies. Ladies and gentlemen, your class president Violet Verona.

Applause from the audience as MUSTARD hands VIOLET the microphone and exits stage left.

VIOLET: Good evening. Would the following student renovation committee members please join me on stage? Scarlett Starr, social committee representative—

SCARLETT enters stage right.

SCARLETT: *And captain of the cheerleading team! Go, Lions!*

VIOLET: *(With zero school spirit.)* Yay. Go, fight, fight.

SCARLETT: No, silly! It's go, fight, win!

VIOLET: *(Under her breath.)* Not if it's *our* team.

PLUM enters stage right.

PLUM: *(Leaning into the microphone behind VIOLET.)* Statistically speaking, she's not wrong.

VIOLET: *(Clearing her throat and blocking PLUM.)* Penelope Plum, Academic Bowl captain and Science Club chair.

PLUM: Technically speaking, that's "Science Club president." We hold offices just like any other extracurricular club.

VIOLET: Yes. Sorry. How could I have forgotten? Now let's see . . . Who else? Oh, yes. Armando Amarillo, Foreign Language Club.

ARMANDO enters stage right with a movie star wave and a huge smile at the audience.

ARMANDO: ¡Buenas tardes! ¡Qué emocionante!

VIOLET: In English, please, Armando.

ARMANDO: Of course. I am honored to be part of this historic occasion. Back in my country—

VIOLET: I'm sorry, Armando, but we really don't have time for story hour right now. We have a ribbon cutting ceremony to get to.

ARMANDO: I understand. *(Into the microphone to the audience.)* If you wish to hear more stories of excitement and adventure, Foreign Language Club meets on Wednesdays at four. Please join us. We have t-shirts!

SCARLETT: This message brought to you by the committee for "I'm from another country, I'm exotic, so I get more stage time than the rest of you."

VIOLET: *(With a sigh.)* Moving on... Rose Rodriguez, Sunshine Service Club. *(Looking up from her clipboard and around the audience.)* Rose? Are you here? ...Rose?

PLUM, who has been leaning toward stage left listening, steps up to the microphone.

PLUM: *(To VIOLET.)* Rose is inquiring as to whether her presence on stage is mandatory.

VIOLET: *(Rolling her eyes and moving towards stage left.)* Rose! We talked about this!

VIOLET appears to be speaking to someone offstage left while SCARLETT and PLUM talk.

SCARLETT: Presents?? Ooh!! We're getting presents?!

PLUM: Presence. "C-E." Not "presents." She wants to know if her presence is mandatory.

SCARLETT: Oh. ...Who's this Mandi Tory?

PLUM: *(With a sigh.)* I weep for the future of humanity.

VIOLET strides back to the microphone dragging a reluctant ROSE in tow.

VIOLET: I apologize for the delay, ladies and gentlemen. As I was saying, Rose Rodriguez, Sunshine Service Club. *(To ROSE.)* Say "hello," Rose.

ROSE: *(Barely audible.)* Hello.

VIOLET: *(Patting ROSE'S shoulder.)* See? I told you. You didn't die.

PLUM: Although, to be fair, human beings *can* in fact be scared to death. Any strong emotional reaction could trigger fatal amounts of the chemical adrenaline in the body. It happens very rarely, but it can happen to anyone.

ROSE: *(Petrified.)* Anyone??

VIOLET: *(With an impatient sigh.)* Thank you, Penelope. As always, you are so... informative.

PLUM: You're quite welcome. I thoroughly enjoy dispersing useful knowledge.

VIOLET: *(Gently pushing ROSE in PLUM'S direction.)* Well then, if Rose passes out, I hope you know CPR. *(Glancing at her clipboard.)* We're getting behind schedule. Let's continue... the rest

of our student committee members include Jimmy Peacock, athletics...

MUSTARD: (*Popping onto stage briefly.*) Uhhh... Jimmy's going to be a few minutes late.

VIOLET: (*Rolling her eyes; under her breath.*) Of course he is. (*Into the microphone, her voice trailing off in distaste.*) And finally... Gus Green, Ecology Club.

GUS strides on from stage right.

GUS: Why, thank you, Violet. I see once again you've saved the best for last! (*Smoothly taking the microphone from VIOLET.*)

VIOLET: Hey!

GUS: Good evening, ladies and gentlemen! I do apologize for the many, many delays in getting this ribbon cutting ceremony started. As most of us are already aware, speed and efficiency are not exactly our beloved president's best qualities.

VIOLET: Excuse me??

GUS: Fortunately, we do live in a democracy, and therefore, there is always the option to call for an impeachment should the need ever arise.

SCARLETT: Ooh! I'll take one!

PLUM: (*To SCARLETT.*) He said "impeachment." Not "peaches."

SCARLETT: Oh. Boo. I'm hungry.

ARMANDO: Elections are so exciting, yes?

VIOLET: This is NOT an election!

VIOLET storms over to GUS and grabs the microphone from him.

GUS: Apparently it's not a democracy either.

VIOLET: (*To GUS.*) You had your chance. I won fair and square.

GUS: (*Under his breath.*) We'll see about that.

VIOLET: Now that we're all... mostly here... (*Clearing her throat and reading from her speech notes.*) An ancient proverb states that it takes a village to raise a child. I would like to propose that it also takes a village to renovate a gymnasium. We, the leaders of Lakewood Middle School's student body, would like to thank you, the community, for all of your time and support over the past several years.

There is some commotion as GREY enters the auditorium and moves toward the stage.

VIOLET: And now, at this time, we will ask our principal, Principal Black, to come up to the stage and do the honors of christening our new gymnasium.

GREY steps up onto the stage. She takes the microphone from VIOLET and clears her throat.

GREY: I'm sorry, ladies and gentlemen. Members of the student renovation committee. Violet. But there will be no ribbon cutting tonight.

The audience reacts vocally in surprise.

VIOLET: What? What do you mean??

SCARLETT: Yay! Now we can go get dinner!

PLUM: Why the abrupt cancellation?

GREY: I'm sorry, Miss Plum, but I don't think now is the appropriate time or place to discuss this.

ARMANDO: Then it is, how you say, a cover-up?

GUS: (*Tsking.*) More political scandal within a corrupt student government.

VIOLET: This is not a cover-up! (*Turning to GREY with uncertainty.*) Is it?

GREY: Don't be ridiculous! Of course not!

VIOLET: Then what's going on?

ARMANDO: Is the ceremony canceled?

SCARLETT: Yeah. When do we get to eat?

MUSTARD: We're still going to be able to play ball, right?

ROSE: (*Meekly.*) Can I get off the stage now?

GREY: Students! (*An afterthought.*) And Coach.

STUDENT in the audience loudly clucks like a chicken.

MUSTARD: (*Pointing at the student in the audience.*) Hey! Watch it!

GREY: (*In a wobbly voice.*) I regret to inform you that Principal Black...
can't be with us tonight for the ceremony.

MUSTARD: Is something wrong, Charlotte? (*Correcting himself.*) I
mean, Vice Principal Grey?

GREY: Yes. Something is wrong. Dreadfully, dreadfully wrong.

VIOLET: What IS it??

JIMMY runs into the auditorium and calls out.

JIMMY: Hey! Anyone know what happened to Principal Black's
office?! It's completely ransacked!

VIOLET: Ransacked?!

GREY: JIMMY PEACOCK! Must you always interrupt me?!

JIMMY: Well... yeah! It's kind of like my hobby.

JIMMY jumps up on the stage with the rest of the STUDENTS.

GREY: (*Sighing; to the audience.*) Again, I'm terribly sorry, but we will
have to reschedule this ceremony. Ladies and gentlemen, you are
dismissed.

MUSTARD: (*To the audience.*) Whoa now. Hold on there. Everybody
just sit back down. (*To GREY.*) You can't send everybody home.
We need them! They're all witnesses!

GREY: Witnesses? To what? We don't even know what happened yet!

MUSTARD: (*To the audience.*) Ladies and gents, just sit tight. We'll
get this ceremony going as soon as we can. (*Stepping away from
microphone; to GREY and STUDENTS on stage.*) Student
renovation committee. Vice Principal Grey. We need to talk.

SCARLETT: (*With a sigh.*) We're not going to dinner anytime soon,
are we?

JIMMY: Nope. Sounds too much like detention. I'm outta here.

JIMMY makes a move to jump off the stage again, but MUSTARD grabs his arm.

MUSTARD: Whoa there, Peacock. Just hold on.

JIMMY: Coach! You can't keep me here! It's Friday night! You can't give kids detention on Friday night! ...Right?

PLUM: Technically? There's no law that says he can't.

JIMMY: (*Whining.*) I'M GONNA DIE!

MUSTARD: Come on now, Jimmy. You're not going to die. We've got our first basketball game next week!

GUS: I wouldn't be too sure about that. If Principal Black doesn't christen the gym, are you sure they'll let you still have the game here?

MUSTARD: Huh... I hadn't thought about that.

VIOLET: Oh, come on. It can't be *that* bad. I'm sure Principal Black just... stepped out or... something.

PLUM: Minutes before the ribbon cutting ceremony?

ARMANDO: With a room full of people waiting?

JIMMY: After taking a leaf blower to his office??

VIOLET: Okay, maybe not.

ROSE: (*Softly.*) I'd run away too if it were me.

VIOLET puts her arm around ROSE.

GREY: I'm afraid, students, there's more to it than that.

VIOLET: What do you mean?

GREY: Principal Black didn't just "step out." Nor did he forget about the ceremony.

GUS: How do you know?

JIMMY: Oh. ...You didn't tell them about the message yet, did you?

MUSTARD: (*To JIMMY.*) Message? What message?

JIMMY: The one spray painted on the office wall.

GREY: JIMMY PEACOCK! Honestly!

JIMMY: What?? (*Under his breath.*) If we have to wait for you to spit it out, we're gonna be here all night.

GUS: (*To JIMMY.*) What did the message say?

JIMMY: Oh! I got it right here. (*Pushes up the sleeve of his shirt to reveal words written in black marker on his arm.*)

VIOLET: You... wrote the message on your arm??

JIMMY: Yeah. I figured it was important. I didn't want to forget it.

SCARLETT: (*With a dreamy sigh.*) What a great idea! You are so smart, Jimmy!

PLUM: James Winston Peacock? Smart??

SCARLETT: (*To JIMMY.*) You're so smart, I bet someday you could become President of the United States of America!

VIOLET: (*Skeptically.*) President... Peacock??

SCARLETT: (*To JIMMY.*) I'd vote for you.

PLUM: And *that* will be the day I *leave* this country.

ARMANDO: You could always visit *my* home country. It is beautiful any time of year!

PLUM: (*Coolly to ARMANDO.*) I can't imagine I'll ever need the travel tip. Not with the Internet, thank you.

GUS: (*With a dramatic sigh.*) As usual, we're getting off track, and our beloved class president is doing nothing to stop it.

VIOLET: Excuse me??

GUS: (*To JIMMY.*) Again, I ask, what did the message say?

JIMMY: (*Reading his arm.*) It says, "Black won't be back."

VIOLET: You needed to write *that* on your arm??

GUS: Great. Principal Black's been kidnapped by Dr. Seuss.

ARMANDO: Who is this "Dr. Seuss?" I do not believe I have made the privilege of knowing him.

MUSTARD: "Black won't be back." Huh. Sounds like some sort of threat.

GREY: That was my fear as well.

PLUM: (*To GREY.*) Are we in any danger, Vice Principal Grey?

GREY: I honestly don't know.

ROSE: (*Whimpering.*) Now can I leave???

MUSTARD: I don't think we should.

JIMMY: Aw, come on! Why not??

MUSTARD: The way I see it, we were the last ones to see Principal Black. In that final committee meeting after school.

JIMMY: So?

MUSTARD: So If anyone's going to take the fall for Principal Black's disappearance, it's going to be one of us.

VIOLET: But that's ridiculous! None of us have any reason to hurt Principal Black!

GUS: Oh, so now you're a mind reader? That's very interesting.

VIOLET: What I *meant* is, we're just a bunch of kids! And a PE teacher. And a vice principal. How could any one of us—?

GUS: Please, tell me more about these superhuman mind reading abilities of yours. Maybe *then* I'll understand how you won the election.

JIMMY: Sheesh, guys. For the love of guacamole, give it a rest!

SCARLETT: Oh, please don't mention guacamole! I am so *hungry*!

PLUM: Vice Principal Grey, before we add another starving cheerleader to the cliché, what do you propose we do?

GREY: (*Firmly.*) The only thing we *can* do. We have to find Principal Black. We'll search this entire school from top to bottom until we find out what happened.

JIMMY: NOOOOOO! I'm going to be trapped in this school forever!!

ARMANDO: Hooray! A mystery and intrigue! How exciting! I feel like Dr. Watson Sherlock!

MUSTARD: (*Giving ARMANDO a jovial slap on the back.*) I think you mean Sherlock Holmes, kid.

ARMANDO: Yes! Him.

VIOLET: If we're going to start looking for clues, I guess we better begin in the last place we saw him.

VIOLET and GUS: The principal's office.

JIMMY: The principal's office?! Can this night possibly get any worse??

Lights fade.

SCENE 2
PRINCIPAL BLACK'S OFFICE

AT START: *Lights rise. A paper covered desk now sits at center stage. A couple overturned chairs are downstage of desk. The floor is littered with papers and books. An overturned plant is optional. If sets are used, the words "Black won't be back" are spray painted on the wall behind the desk. GREY, MUSTARD, and STUDENTS enter, JIMMY reluctantly shuffling in last.*

VIOLET: Wow! This place is a disaster!

GREY: To be honest, this isn't much different from usual. Principal Black is not exactly what you'd call "organized."

PLUM: *(Looking around in distaste.)* At the very least, he seems to have left in a hurry.

GUS: Or *someone* did.

ROSE: What if that *someone* is still in here??

ALL nervously look around in silence for a beat.

MUSTARD: Well, that's exactly what we're here to figure out. Come on. Let's spread out and look for clues.

JIMMY: Yeah. Don't be *chickens!* *(Squawking on the last word; MUSTARD glares at him.)*

ALL begin scanning the stage for clues.

ARMANDO: What exactly are these clues that we are searching for?

MUSTARD: Anything that seems off or... out of place.

VIOLET: Like the entire office??

MUSTARD: Just keep looking.

VIOLET: Books... papers... file folders... pens and pencils...

GUS: You know, we really don't need a running commentary. This isn't "Scooby Doo."

SCARLETT: I wish this *was* "Scooby Doo." At least then there'd be snacks. Scooby snacks!

GUS: You heard it, folks. Somebody get the cheerleader a biscuit.

VIOLET: You know, Gus, I'm starting to see why you lost the election.

GUS: And why's that? Because I didn't bake cookies to hand out to the entire student body like some other candidate I know?

VIOLET: No. Because you're kind of a jerk.

MUSTARD: OK, that's enough out of you. The both of you. If I didn't know any better, I'd say you two are starting to sound like Principal Black and— *(He shoots a glance at GREY, sees her glaring at him, and stops talking abruptly.)*

PLUM: Starting to sound like whom?

MUSTARD: Uh, it's nothing. Never mind.

ARMANDO: Perhaps I am again misunderstanding your English, but it does not sound like it is nothing.

JIMMY: Yeah, I have to agree with the foreign kid. Coach, what aren't you telling us?

SCARLETT: *(Hands on hips, indignantly.)* Do you have food?

MUSTARD: *(To SCARLETT.)* What?? No! *(To the others who are now staring at MUSTARD uncertainly.)* Really, it's nothing! I just... I know Principal Black didn't get along with... certain individuals in the school.

JIMMY: Like who?

PLUM: *(Correcting JIMMY.)* You mean, "Like whom."

JIMMY: *(To PLUM.)* No one cares. *(To MUSTARD.)* What's going on, Coach?

GUS: If I'm not mistaken, I think Coach Mustard may be hiding something.

PLUM: And it's not the bacon.

JIMMY: *(To PLUM.)* That's steal the bacon, Brainiac. Not hide the bacon. No wonder you're failing gym.

PLUM: Pardon me, but I am not failing gym.

MUSTARD: Actually? You are. I should know. I'm the teacher.

PLUM: I am not failing. I am simply... choosing not to excel.

JIMMY: Or pass.

PLUM: Insignificant athletic grades aside, *(Turning back to MUSTARD.)* I agree with Gus. I'm certain that Coach Mustard is hiding something.

GUS: Coach?

MUSTARD: *(With a deep sigh.)* Well, it really isn't my business, but... I know that things have been a little bit rocky between Principal Black and Vice Principal Grey lately.

ALL turn to look at GREY, who clears her throat.

GREY: It's true. We haven't exactly been seeing eye to eye.

ARMANDO: (*Excitedly to GUS.*) Is that it? Did we do it? Did we discover the murderer??

GREY: Murderer?! Don't be ridiculous! We've had a few... disagreements. That's all!

MUSTARD: "Disagreements?" Charlotte, the whole front office could hear you two.

VIOLET: What were you fighting about?

GREY: (*Stiffly.*) I really don't see how that's any of your concern.

ROSE: (*Softly.*) Vice Principal Grey? We're really just trying to help. We want to find Principal Black.

JIMMY: (*To Violet.*) She speaks?

GREY: (*Sighing.*) I know, dear. Well, to be quite honest... Principal Black has mentioned a time or two that I might be... happier... working elsewhere.

VIOLET: Working elsewhere?

GUS: He was trying to fire you??

VIOLET: What?!

JIMMY: My hero!

GREY: (*Glaring at JIMMY.*) And it's all because of students like you, Jimmy Peacock! If I were able to discipline students the way that they should be disciplined, the principal and I wouldn't have had so many disagreements.

VIOLET: I can't believe I'm just now hearing about this!

GUS: What? An uninformed president? Shocking.

MUSTARD: (*To GUS.*) Look, little guy, give it a rest or I'm gonna make you start running laps.

GUS: (*Under his breath.*) I'd like to see you try.

GREY: Anyways, I don't see what personality conflicts and educational differences have to do with the principal's disappearance.

PLUM: Unfortunately, Vice Principal Grey, it does paint you in a rather questionable light.

MUSTARD: Oh, now, I don't know about that.

JIMMY: Speaking of paint... check this out. It's a spray paint trail!

SCARLETT: We should follow it! Maybe it'll lead us to the murderer!

GREY: Murderer?! Are we back on this again??

VIOLET: She's right. Let's not get worked up over nothing. There's not a single shred of evidence in here that Principal Black was murdered. (*Picking up a lunch tray.*) Not unless he was bludgeoned to death with this lunch tray.

GREY: Lunch tray? That's peculiar.

VIOLET: What is?

GREY: That lunch tray. Principal Black adamantly refuses to eat school lunches. He considers them exceedingly unhealthy.

PLUM: Hear, hear!

GREY: I can't for the life of me imagine why there would be a lunch tray in Principal Black's—

GUS: That's it! That must be a clue!

GUS grabs the tray from VIOLET.

VIOLET: Hey!

SCARLETT: (*Hopefully.*) You didn't happen to find any food with that tray, did you?

GUS: (*To SCARLETT.*) Uh... no. (*To ALL.*) All right. New plan.

VIOLET: Excuse me? Who died and made you president?

GUS: (*To VIOLET.*) Trust me. You don't want me to answer that. (*To ALL OTHERS.*) Now... where is the most logical place to find a lunch tray?

ROSE: The cafeteria?

GUS: Exactly! I say, we examine the cafeteria next for clues!

PLUM: (*To VIOLET.*) You can't fault his logic. (*To GUS.*) I second the motion.

GUS: On to the cafeteria!

MUSTARD: Hold up now, everybody. Let's not be hasty.

JIMMY: Yeah. What about this spray paint trail? It might lead to something important.

GUS: Like what? An empty spray paint can?

GREY: All right, children. Settle down. (*To MUSTARD.*) We seem to have reached an impasse.

ARMANDO: (*To JIMMY.*) Impasse?

JIMMY: A difficult decision.

ARMANDO: Oh. Thank you.

PLUM: Actually, it means deadlock.

SCARLETT: Who's dead?!

PLUM: (*To SCARLETT; exasperated.*) Nobody is dead.

MUSTARD: Might I propose a solution?

SCARLETT: (*To MUSTARD.*) You want somebody dead??

MUSTARD: No!! I meant, a solution to this impasse!

JIMMY: (*To ARMANDO.*) Difficult decision.

PLUM: (*To ARMANDO.*) Deadlock.

ARMANDO: Yes, I remember. I'm foreign, not forgetful.

MUSTARD: What if we simply split up?

VIOLET: Split up?

ROSE: (*Nervously.*) Split up??

MUSTARD: Half of the group could begin searching the cafeteria; the other half can follow the spray paint trail to see where it leads.

GUS: I call leading the team to the cafeteria!

GREY: I don't know, Coach. Do you really think that's wise? Letting the kids go off by themselves?

MUSTARD: We can separate. One adult in each group.

JIMMY: I'm in Coach Mustard's group!

MUSTARD: (*To JIMMY.*) You don't even know where I'm going yet.

JIMMY: Don't care. I'm with the Colonel!

SCARLETT: If Jimmy's with the Colonel, then *I'm* with the Colonel too!

MUSTARD: Uh... okay. I guess I've got Jimbo and the cheerleader then. The foreign kid can come along too.

VIOLET: Well, I'm staying with the vice principal. (*Looking over at ROSE, who nods.*) So is Rose.

PLUM: As will I.

VIOLET: (*Grabbing the tray back from GUS.*) And we're going to the cafeteria.

SCARLETT: The cafeteria??

GUS: Hey! The cafeteria was *my* idea!

GREY: You're welcome to join us.

VIOLET: What? No, he's not!

SCARLETT: (*Whining to JIMMY.*) But there's *food* in the cafeteria!

GUS: (*To GREY.*) So you're telling me, my choice is between the meat heads and the foreign kid or the fussy know-it-alls and the worst president in our school's history? Some choice. I'd be better off taking my chances looking for the murderer on my own.

MUSTARD: Sorry, kid. No one is going off alone here.

GREY: And we are *not* looking for a murderer!

GUS: (*Under his breath.*) Maybe *you're* not. Especially if you *are* the murderer.

VIOLET: Hey! I heard that!

MUSTARD: (*Putting GUS in a playful headlock.*) You can come along with us, kid.

GUS: (*Shrugging MUSTARD off.*) On a wild goose chase? No thanks. At least if I go with them, I can keep an eye on the... suspect. (*Turning to VIOLET.*) Or *suspects*. Who knows how deep this conspiracy goes??

MUSTARD: (*To JIMMY.*) Is that kid all right in the head?

JIMMY: The world may never know.

VIOLET: All right then. Coach Mustard? We should set up a call time to check in. Let's say, twenty minutes?

JIMMY: Twenty minutes? We're still going to be here in twenty minutes?!

VIOLET: (*To MUSTARD'S group.*) Keep looking for clues. Keep looking for Principal Black.

GREY: And please... be careful.

MUSTARD: Oh, it'll be fine, Charlotte. We're just taking a quick tour of the school.

JIMMY: On a Friday.

ROSE: At night.

GUS: With a murderer on the loose.

SCARLETT: And no dinner!

MUSTARD: Exactly. What could go wrong?

Lights fade.

SCENE 3**BACK SIDE OF THE GYMNASIUM**

AT START: *Lights rise. The stage is empty with the exception of one piece of athletic equipment downstage right to suggest a gymnasium: basketball racks, jump rope rack, dumbbell rack, etc.*

JIMMY: *(Offstage.)* This way! The trail leads right through here...

JIMMY, SCARLETT, ARMANDO, and MUSTARD enter stage left.

JIMMY: Aw, man!

ARMANDO: We are back in the gymnasium, yes?

JIMMY: Gymnasium.

MUSTARD: Yep. Sure looks that way. Guess this clue was a dud.
(Gesturing to the audience.) At least we know all our witnesses are still here.

ARMANDO: And alive!

MUSTARD: Don't be morbid.

ARMANDO: *(To JIMMY, questioningly.)* Morbid?

JIMMY: Don't talk about death. *(To MUSTARD.)* What are we supposed to do *now*, Coach?

SCARLETT: I don't know about you, but *I* think we should go to the cafeteria with the others and get some food! But after Jimmy finds some different shoes. Those ones are disgusting.

JIMMY: My shoes? What's wrong with them?

MUSTARD circles JIMMY, staring at the ground.

MUSTARD: Jimbo... you're trailing paint everywhere. Black paint.

JIMMY: Uh...

ARMANDO: We have been following *your* paint trail this entire time??

JIMMY: *(Holding up his hands.)* Now hold on! Just wait a minute. I can explain!

MUSTARD: Okay. Let's hear it.

There is a long pause as JIMMY gathers his thoughts.

SCARLETT: Jimmy?

JIMMY: Fine! Okay! I did it!

ARMANDO: You killed Principal Black??

JIMMY: What?? No! I... I was the one who spray painted Black's office. But he was already gone when I got there, I swear!

MUSTARD: (*Crossing his arms.*) James Peacock, you better explain yourself!

JIMMY: I... it was during the ceremony earlier. Grey was chasing me, so I ran into Black's office to hide from her. And it was trashed! So I... I found some spray paint and added the message.

ARMANDO: So *you* are this Dr. Seuss, yes?

JIMMY: Yes. I mean, no! Well... kind of.

MUSTARD: Jimmy... You know how this looks, right? It looks bad!

ARMANDO: Yeah. Really bad!

JIMMY: I know! That's why I haven't said anything! Especially in front of Grey. That lady's cuckoo for Cocoa Puffs.

MUSTARD: Now, now. No trash talking the vice principal.

SCARLETT: (*Taking his hand.*) Jimmy, I want you to know that if they take you to jail, I'll wait for you.

ARMANDO: Jail?

JIMMY: Jail?!

MUSTARD: Jimmy is not going to jail.

JIMMY: Yeah. Jimmy is definitely not going to jail!

MUSTARD: But we do need to get this mess cleaned up.

JIMMY: Oh, this stuff is permanent. It doesn't come out. I've tried.

MUSTARD: I meant, we've got to find Principal Black and get this mess cleaned up. It's the only way to get the whole story and clear your name.

JIMMY: Oh. Right. Okay... how do we do that?

ARMANDO: We keep looking for clues?

MUSTARD: We keep looking for clues.

Sudden shouting from the POWDER PUFFS with megaphones and picket signs in the back of the audience. MUSTARD, JIMMY, SCARLETT, and ARMANDO stare at the back of the house.

POWDER PUFF 1: Who are we?

ALL POWDER PUFFS: Powder puffs!

POWDER PUFF 1: What do we want?

ALL POWDER PUFFS: A football team!

POWDER PUFF 1: When do we want it?

ALL POWDER PUFFS: Right now! Hike!

ARMANDO: *What is that??*

MUSTARD: *(Groaning.)* The Powder Puff girls.

ARMANDO: Powder Puff girls? Are they like cheerleaders?

SCARLETT: Ew, no. They're more like football players.

JIMMY: They are not football players.

SCARLETT: Well, they're not cheerleaders!

MUSTARD: They're a nuisance is what they are. I'm going to put a stop to this before they rile up all our witnesses.

MUSTARD exits the stage toward the POWDER PUFFS.

ARMANDO: Forgive me, but I still do not understand. They are cheerleaders who play football?

JIMMY: They are cheerleaders who want to play football.

SCARLETT: They are not cheerleaders!

JIMMY: Well, they're not going to play football. It's never gonna happen. Not if Coach Mustard has anything to say about it.

ARMANDO: But... why can't the cheerleaders and the football players all just play together?

SCARLETT: *(Simultaneously.)* Ew! No!

JIMMY: *(Simultaneously.)* Gross!

MUSTARD reenters stage followed by the POWDER PUFFS, carrying picket signs.

POWDER PUFF 1: Coach Mustard, you know that we have the right to protest what we see as unfair treatment!

MUSTARD: Unfair treatment?! You girls have a soccer team, a volleyball team, a basketball team, a softball team, a track team, a tennis team, a swim team, and a golf team. I think you even have a ping pong team!

POWDER PUFF 1: It's called table tennis.

MUSTARD: Call it whatever froo-froo name you want! You *have* your sports!

SCARLETT: You forgot cheerleading, dance, and gymnastics!

MUSTARD and POWDER PUFF 1 exchange glances and then look at SCARLETT.

SCARLETT: What?

JIMMY: *(Exaggerated whisper to ARMANDO.)* They're not really sports.

ARMANDO: Ah. I see.

SCARLETT: Hey! Yes, they are!

MUSTARD: *(To POWDER PUFF 1.)* Regardless, I see no reason to start *another* team for you girls. Do you have any idea how much court time I've lost already?? We're down to one hour three times a week! One hour! All so the cheerleading team can practice their confounded casket tosses!

SCARLETT: Coach! That's *basket* tosses! Not casket tosses.

MUSTARD: *(To SCARLETT.)* Oh, you're not fooling me! I've seen the way you girls throw! It's only a matter of time. *(To POWDER PUFF 1.)* It's all Principal Black's fault. How am I supposed to build a championship-winning dynasty on three measly hours a week??

POWDER PUFF 1: Um... yeah. Not really our problem. We've got a protest to run. Come on, girls.

POWDER PUFF 1 turns to leave; other POWDER PUFFS follow.

MUSTARD: Now wait. Hold on there a minute! You can't go out there right now. You'll disrupt the ribbon cutting ceremony!

JIMMY: To be fair, hasn't it kind of already been disrupted?

POWDER PUFF 1: Exactly! We have a gymnasium—

JIMMY: Gymnasium.

POWDER PUFF 1: —full of the most influential leaders in our community just sitting out there twiddling their thumbs! What better time than now to get our point across?

MUSTARD: I'm sorry, girls, but in Principal Black's absence, I'm going to have to step in and put my foot down. I can't let you go out there and—

POWDER PUFF 1: Colonel... when in the course of middle school athletics it becomes necessary for one team to dissolve the competitive bands which have connected them with another—

MUSTARD: Are you kidding me? Now you're poaching the Declaration of Independence??

POWDER PUFF 1: You don't like it? All right. How about this one then? We the female athletes of Lakewood Middle School—

POWDER PUFF 2: —in order to form a more perfect athletic department—

POWDER PUFF 3: —establish justice—

POWDER PUFF 4: —insure intergender tranquility—

MUSTARD: This is ridiculous!

POWDER PUFF 5: —provide for the common need for exercise—

POWDER PUFF 2: —promote the general welfare—

POWDER PUFF 3: —and secure the blessings of good health to ourselves and our posterity—

MUSTARD: Posterity?? You girls are like... ten! [*Adjust the number ten to an appropriate age for your cast.*]

POWDER PUFF 1: —do ordain and establish the need for a girls' football team at Lakewood Middle School!

POWDER PUFFS jump up and down cheering loudly.

ARMANDO: I am so confused.

JIMMY: Welcome to American girls.

POWDER PUFF 1: Powder puffs! Let's go protest!

POWDER PUFFS exit stage and move toward the back of the house, chanting.

MUSTARD: (*Fuming.*) I told him! I told him and I told him!

SCARLETT: Told who?

MUSTARD: Give 'em an inch and they'll take a mile. I tried to warn him!

SCARLETT: Warn who?

JIMMY: It's okay, Coach. The scary girls are gone now.

MUSTARD: You don't get it! They're never really gone! They're always here! And it's only a matter of time before they get exactly what they want. And then once again, I'll be forced to shave even more time off my gym schedule to accommodate yet another meaningless sport for girls!

JIMMY: (*Sarcastically.*) Wow, Coach. Tell us how you *really* feel.

ARMANDO: (*Somewhat fearfully.*) Please. Don't.

MUSTARD: I feel angry! And betrayed! And ignored! And I'm tired of it!

JIMMY: Okay then.

ARMANDO: (*To JIMMY.*) It isn't just the puffy girls that are scary.

SCARLETT: (*Crossing to him and holding up a baseball bat.*) Don't worry, Armando. If the Colonel goes cuckoo, I'll protect us with *this*.

JIMMY: Give me that! (*JIMMY takes the bat from SCARLETT.*) Where in the world did you find this?

SCARLETT: On the floor. In the corner.

JIMMY: Coach? ...Are you thinking what I'm thinking?

MUSTARD: That baseball season doesn't start for a couple more months?

JIMMY: Exactly. Scarlett, I think you just found another clue!

SCARLETT: I did? Yay! Go me!

ARMANDO: Good job, puffy girl!

SCARLETT: I am *not* puffy!

MUSTARD: All the offseason sporting equipment *should* be locked up in a closet in the locker room. (*He takes the bat from JIMMY.*) If this bat is missing, there might be other equipment that's gone missing too.

JIMMY: So we check out the locker room next?

MUSTARD: Sounds like a plan. I'll text Vice Principal Grey and let her know.

MUSTARD hands the bat back to JIMMY and takes out his cell phone.

SCARLETT: Wait. The locker room? (*Suspiciously.*) Which locker room?

JIMMY: The boys' locker room, of course.

SCARLETT: Ew!! Not the *boys'* locker room! I can't go in there!!

JIMMY: You don't have to. In fact, you can just stay right here.

SCARLETT: Wait. Now you want to leave me here alone with a murderer on the loose??

JIMMY: Don't worry. If anything goes wrong, you can protect yourself with *this*. (*JIMMY hands SCARLETT the bat.*)

MUSTARD: (*Pocketing his phone.*) All right! Message sent. Let's go!

MUSTARD, ARMANDO, and JIMMY move toward stage right exit. SCARLETT hesitates, looking around nervously and then down at the bat in her hands. She jumps, startled.

SCARLETT: Hey, guys! Wait for me!

SCARLETT runs off after them, stage right. Lights fade.

SCENE 4 CAFETERIA

AT START: *Lights rise. Two lunch tables sit at center stage to suggest a school cafeteria. The tables are covered with open brown bags and canned goods as the SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS work quietly to fill the bags with food. Optional: Music like "I'm Walking on Sunshine" or "Happy." VIOLET, GREY, PLUM, GUS, and ROSE enter, stage left. All but ROSE look around in surprise.*

GUS: What is this?

VIOLET: It looks like fun.

GREY: It looks unsupervised.

PLUM: It looks like a food drive.

ROSE: It is! This is the Sunshine Service Club's annual food drive.

ROSE crosses to a SUNSHINE CLUB MEMBER and holds a whispered conversation.

GUS: Who in their right mind holds a food drive on a Friday night? Am I right?

VIOLET: People who care more about others than they do about their own social life?

GUS: You're one to talk.

GREY: Mr. Green, I will have you know that I will not tolerate any of your haranguing Miss Verona—

GUS: Haranguing? I barely said two words!

GREY: Regardless, this ends now.

GUS: Whatever. (*Under his breath.*) Teacher's pet.

GREY: I think you mean "vice principal's pet?"

GUS: What? How did you hear that?!

GREY: I have excellent hearing.

GUS: Well, bully for you.

VIOLET: Bully?

GUS: Yeah, bully. You know? Theodore Roosevelt? Twenty-sixth president? He's kind of like my role model.

PLUM: "Speak softly and carry a big stick"?

GUS: Yes! Exactly!

VIOLET: A big stick, huh? Sounds like a perfect murder weapon.

GREY: Now, now, Violet. We still don't *know* if a murder has occurred.

PLUM: Yes. No sense in stirring up sensationalism. Let's just have a chat with Rose's club to see if they noticed anything amiss.

PLUM crosses toward ROSE and the SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS.

GUS: You know, I bet if Dr. Spock and C3PO ever had a baby... it would turn out exactly like her.

VIOLET: Yeah, you may want to keep working on the "speak softly" part.

VIOLET follows PLUM.

GUS: (*To GREY.*) Opinionated, isn't she?

GREY: You know, Mr. Green, I have noticed one interesting fact about your favorite president.

GUS: Oh, yeah? What's that?

GREY: Theodore Roosevelt only became president after his current president died.

GUS: Oh. Uh... yeah. McKinley was—

GREY: Just a warning, Mr. Green. I'm watching you. I wouldn't try anything funny.

GREY follows PLUM and VIOLET, who are now silently conversing with ROSE and the SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS.

GUS: And I could have chosen to go with the meatheads!

Shaking his head, GUS joins the others.

VIOLET: *(To GUS.)* Rose says her club members haven't noticed anything unusual in here tonight.

PLUM: *(Peering into the brown bags.)* Besides the unequal distribution of vegetables to starches?

VIOLET: Penelope! We're here to search for clues, not critique the service club! *(To SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS.)* Sorry, you guys.

ROSE: It's okay. We always get a strangely enormous donation of canned beets. I guess nobody else ever wants them.

GUS: Here, let me see one. Maybe we can feed it to the cheerleader.

GREY: *(Clearing her throat loudly.)* Why don't we just take a look around to see if we notice anything unusual?

PLUM: I found one can of creamed corn mixed in with all the other cans of regular—

GREY: Not with the food.

PLUM: Oh. Of course.

GUS: Well. What do you know? The brainiac isn't always right.

VIOLET: Gus! Quit being such a jerk!

GUS: I will. When you quit being such a dictator! Oh wait. That's never going to happen. Because you think you won the election.

VIOLET: I *did* win the election.

GREY: Children! That is enough! I will not have this incessant fighting in my school!

GUS: Fighting? Who's fighting? It's just a friendly debate.

PLUM: It seems there is not much left to debate. The election is over. Violet won.

GUS: You think so? Really? Well, you know what? We have enough people in this little club here for a focus group. *(To VIOLET.)* You think more people in this school voted for you? Let's take a quick poll right now and find out, shall we? *(To SUNSHINE SERVICE MEMBER 1.)* You. Glasses. Who did you vote for—me or her?

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1: Uh, well...

VIOLET: Stop it, Gus. You're making them uncomfortable!

GUS: How about you with the braids? Who did you vote for?

SUNSHINE MEMBER 2: I thought voting was supposed to be confiden—

GUS: You. In the dumb t-shirt.

SUNSHINE MEMBER 3: *(Looking down.)* Dumb t-shirt? What's wrong with my t-shirt?

GUS: Who'd you vote for as president—her or me?

SUNSHINE MEMBER 3: I... I... I really don't like confrontation!

SUNSHINE MEMBER 3 runs offstage.

VIOLET: Now see what you've done!

VIOLET runs off after SUNSHINE MEMBER 3.

GREY: Augustus Green!

GUS: Whoa. Augustus. Pulling out the big guns. Have you been talking to my mom?

GREY: I am ending this nonsense once and for all!

GUS: Okay...?

GREY: *(Sternly.)* Sit down.

GUS: *(Sitting.)* I'm not going to lie; you've always been kind of scary. But this is a new level of scary even for y—

GREY: I'm going to tell you why you didn't become president.

GUS: Because no one in this school knows how to count?

GREY: You would do well to listen closely.

GUS: Okay, okay. Sheesh.

GREY: On the day of the election, Principal Black came to me with a problem to resolve.

GUS: A problem?

GREY: The vote for student body president had come in at a dead tie.

GUS: A tie?? I knew it!

GREY: The principal told me to decide who would be the better candidate to have in office leading our students.

VIOLET renters consoling SUNSHINE MEMBER 3.

GUS: I *knew* there was no way I lost!

GREY: And I chose Violet Verona.

GUS: I—Wait. You chose Violet! Not me!

GREY: I did. At the time, I thought it was what was best for the school.

Now, after spending some time with you... I am even more certain than ever that I made the right decision.

GUS: But... but that's not fair! It was a tie! There should have been a recount! Or another vote!

GREY: Perhaps. But what's done is done now.

GUS: What's done is democracy, the right to vote, and freedom!

PLUM: Now, Gus, don't be overdramatic. It's just a school election.

VIOLET: No, he's... he's right. That wasn't fair.

GUS: Oh! Now you believe me?!

GUS sits abruptly, crosses his arms, and sulks.

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1: (To *VIOLET*.) Um... Excuse me? We found this. Is this something you might be looking for?

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1 hands a Spanish book to VIOLET.

VIOLET: A Spanish book? Where did you find this?

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1: On a table. In the back. While you all were fighting.

SUNSHINE MEMBER 2: We thought maybe someone lost it.

SUNSHINE MEMBER 3: And you could get it back to them.

GREY: How kind! Thank you!

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1: We're the Sunshine Service Club. It's what we do.

SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS move back to their brown bags and resume packing.

ROSE: They're great, right?

VIOLET: *(To GREY.)* What do you think? Could it be a clue?

GREY: Well, it certainly doesn't belong in the cafeteria.

PLUM: *(Taking the Spanish book.)* At the very least, we could take it over to the World Languages classroom and see if we notice anything else out of place there.

GREY, PLUM, VIOLET, and ROSE turn to GUS, who has remained stubbornly silent.

VIOLET: Gus? Thoughts?

GUS: I don't care. Do what you want. It doesn't really matter anymore. Nothing does.

VIOLET: Of course it does! Principal Black is *missing*—

PLUM: *(Looking over at the SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS.)*

Pardon me, but is that something we really want to be spreading around the school?

ROSE: Oh, you don't have to worry about the Sunshine Club. None of us are really known for talking.

GREY: *(Looking up from her cell phone.)* Coach Mustard just texted. His group discovered a rogue baseball bat in the gymnasium. They're on their way to the locker room now.

VIOLET: Then I guess we can head over to World Languages. Unless... unless you have any better ideas, Gus?

GUS shrugs and stands.

GUS: Nope. Whatever you say, Madam President.

GUS exits stage left. GREY, VIOLET, PLUM, and ROSE watch him go.

ROSE: I... I think we may have broken him.

PLUM: He'll recover. As I said, it's only a school election.

PLUM exits stage left, following GUS.

VIOLET: Rose, would you mind giving me and the vice principal a minute?

ROSE: Of course.

ROSE hugs SUNSHINE MEMBER 1 and exits stage left, following PLUM. VIOLET turns to GREY.

GREY: Now, Violet, I know you're disappointed...

VIOLET: You picked me? And you let me think I'd won? How could you?

GREY: Violet, dear, I knew how much this race meant to you. I didn't want you to be disappointed.

VIOLET: You cheated! You cheated to get me to win and then you didn't even tell me about it?

GREY: I did *not* cheat. Principal Black told me to—

VIOLET: I didn't think we kept secrets. Not from each other. Mom... how could you?

VIOLET rushes off stage left. GREY watches her go and sighs. Then, noticing the SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS staring, she turns to them.

GREY: (*Threateningly.*) Not a word about this to anyone, do you understand?

SUNSHINE MEMBER 1: (*Nervously.*) We heard nothing!

SUNSHINE SERVICE CLUB MEMBERS hurry back to stuffing brown bags with food. Optional: GREY crosses to the table and turns on the scene's opening music again. Then, head high, GREY exits stage left. Lights fade.

SCENE 5
LOCKER ROOM

AT START: *Lights rise. A single bench sits center stage. If a set is used, lockers can suggest a locker room. A duffel bag, articles of athletic clothing, an empty pizza box, food wrappers, and a basketball are scattered across the floor. MUSTARD stands center stage, hands on hips, with JIMMY on his right and ARMANDO on his left.*

MUSTARD: Man. I hate to say it... but you guys are pigs!

JIMMY: What do you mean? I think it looks pretty good in here. Better than my bedroom.

ARMANDO: *(Peering at the stage.)* Does your bedroom also have an army of ants?

JIMMY crosses to ARMANDO.

JIMMY: *(Stomping the “ants” on the stage.)* Aw, they’re just after the leftover pizza.

MUSTARD: Leftover pizza? Ants?? What in the world has been going on in here?! This is *supposed* to be a locker room!

MUSTARD crosses to ARMANDO and JIMMY. He looks down at the stage.

MUSTARD: *(Sighing.)* Jimmy—

MUSTARD crosses to stage right and takes a broom and dustpan from the “closet.”

JIMMY: Coach?

MUSTARD: *(Shoving the broom and dustpan at JIMMY.)* Clean this mess up! *Both* of you. I’ll check out the equipment closet.

MUSTARD exits stage left.

ARMANDO: I thought we were all supposed to be looking for clues.

JIMMY: Yeah, well, now you’ve been demoted to ant duty.

JIMMY shoves the broom and dustpan at ARMANDO.

ARMANDO: Whatever happened to the cheerleader?

JIMMY: Oh, she's still standing right outside refusing to come in.

SCARLETT: (*Offstage.*) Jimmy? Are you guys almost done in there?

JIMMY: (*To ARMANDO.*) See? Now look what you've done. You mention her name and she appears. Like Beetlejuice.

ARMANDO: (*Peering at the stage.*) Beetles?? I thought they were ants!

SCARLETT: (*Offstage.*) Guys? I'm getting freaked out out here all alone!

JIMMY: What? Can't hear you!

SCARLETT: (*Offstage.*) I said, I'm getting freaked out out here ALL ALONE!

SCARLETT enters stage left, baseball bat in hand, freezes, and looks around in disgust.

SCARLETT: Ewwwwwww. Inside isn't much better.

JIMMY: Hey, nobody invited you.

ARMANDO: Unless you would like to help clean up the beetles?

SCARLETT: Beetles?!

JIMMY: They're ants!

SCARLETT: Ants?!

ARMANDO: (*To SCARLETT; holding out the broom.*) Would you care to do the honors?

JIMMY: (*Grabbing the broom from ARMANDO.*) Give me that, you big baby! No wonder you play soccer.

ARMANDO: In my country, we call it *futbol*.

JIMMY: Yeah... you're not fooling anyone.

JIMMY sweeps up the "ants" as MUSTARD enters stage left.

MUSTARD: Well, equipment closet's still locked up tight.

ARMANDO: Which means...?

MUSTARD: Which means I have no clue where that bat came from. It isn't one of the school's.

JIMMY: If it's not from the school then... it could be the murder weapon!

With a squeak, SCARLETT drops the bat on the floor and jumps back from it, wiping her hands on her skirt.

SCARLETT: Sorry. Ants. Ooh, and pizza!

SCARLETT bends down to peer into the pizza box.

MUSTARD: Jimmy! You were supposed to be cleaning this mess up! (To SCARLETT.) Stop! Don't eat that! You don't know how long it's been there!

SCARLETT: But I'm so hungry!

MUSTARD: What I want to know is how the pizza got in here in the first place.

ARMANDO: Do you think it's another clue?

JIMMY: Yeah, it's a clue. It's a clue that I get hungry right after school waiting for a dumb ceremony to start.

SCARLETT: (*Pizza box in hand.*) Right after school today?? But, Jimmy, I was looking all over for you!

JIMMY: (*Sarcastically.*) You were? Gee, I'm sorry. I had no idea.

MUSTARD: Jimmy, you know you're not supposed to bring food in here!

JIMMY: Yeah, I know.

MUSTARD: And you've also got to stop using the locker room to hide out from girls!

SCARLETT: You were *hiding* from me?? But why? I'm adorable!

ARMANDO: (*To SCARLETT.*) I think you've got some pizza on your uniform.

MUSTARD: Jimmy, you're such a great athlete. But you've got to learn to buckle down! You've got to understand when it's time to get serious!

JIMMY: You sound like Principal Black.

MUSTARD: Excuse me?

JIMMY: Principal Black was riding me for the exact same thing.

MUSTARD: When?

JIMMY: Earlier today. When he caught me in here with the pizza and started lecturing me.

ARMANDO: About eating pizza?

JIMMY: No. About my grades.

MUSTARD: Your grades? What's wrong with them?

JIMMY: I'm failing.

MUSTARD: Failing! Failing what?

JIMMY: Everything.

MUSTARD: Everything?!

JIMMY: Well, not everything. I mean, I'm passing home ec and PE, but those hardly count.

MUSTARD: Jimmy... why didn't you talk to me about this?? You know they're going to kick you off the basketball team if you're failing!

SCARLETT: They can't kick Jimmy off the team! He's our best player!

JIMMY: Principal Black didn't seem to care. Between him hunting me down and Grey embarrassing me at the ceremony, I'm about ready to transfer.

MUSTARD: Transfer!

SCARLETT: Transfer?! NO! You can't leave! If you transfer, I'm going to transfer too! Where are we going to transfer to, Jimmy?

JIMMY: I don't know. Timbuktu?

SCARLETT: Timbuktu? That's a funny name for a school. Is it nearby?

JIMMY: Uh... not exactly.

ARMANDO: Might I recommend a slightly more tropical location?

JIMMY: Is it wherever you're from?

ARMANDO: (*Excitedly.*) Yes!

JIMMY: No thanks. I've already seen enough of the road show.

MUSTARD: Okay, kids. There will be no more talk of transferring! Jimmy is *not* going to be kicked off the team. I'll talk to Principal Black.

ARMANDO: How?

SCARLETT: Yeah, how?

MUSTARD: Shoot. I guess we've got to find him first, don't we?

JIMMY: And... now we're back at square one.

ARMANDO: We are back to looking for more clues then, yes?

JIMMY: Sure. But I don't know what you expect to find in here besides ants, a couple pizza crusts—

SCARLETT: Uh, sorry. The crusts are gone.

JIMMY: —and a whole bunch of laundry.

ARMANDO: (*Holding up a single athletic sock.*) What about this stinky sock?

SCARLETT: Ewwwww! Gross! Keep that disgusting thing away from me!

JIMMY: (*To SCARLETT.*) Might I remind you that you probably just consumed about a half dozen ants with your pizza? (*To ARMANDO.*) So it's a dirty pair of socks. What about it?

ARMANDO: Not a pair. Just one. And not "dirty." Stinky. Here. Smell it.

JIMMY: *I'm not going to smell it.*

SCARLETT: Don't look at me! I already feel like I'm about to throw up.

JIMMY: That's just the ants crawling back up.

MUSTARD: Jimmy! Not helping. (*To ARMANDO.*) Let me see that sock.

ARMANDO balls the sock up and tosses it to MUSTARD.

MUSTARD: Nice arm, kid. You don't play baseball, do you?

ARMANDO: Sadly, no. My heart belongs to *futbol*. Or, as you would call it, soccer.

MUSTARD: Too bad. (*Looking down at the sock.*) One lone sock, huh?

ARMANDO: (*Correcting him.*) One lone stinky sock.

JIMMY: Coach... don't be a hero!

MUSTARD: Stop. You kids are just overexaggerating again. (*He takes a hesitant whiff of the sock and gasps, staggering.*)

JIMMY: See! It's toxic!

SCARLETT: Is he going to die?!

MUSTARD: (*Holding the sock out at arm's length.*) I'm fine, I'm fine. Whew!

ARMANDO: It truly is stinky, yes?

MUSTARD: Yes! But that's not your normal, run-of-the-mill, preteen foot odor.

ARMANDO: It's not?

MUSTARD: No. That smell is distinctly chemical.

MUSTARD throws the balled-up sock back at ARMANDO. ARMANDO sniffs tentatively.

JIMMY: Chemical? Like a cleaning closet chemical?

MUSTARD: No. Not that fresh. More like... the stuff they use to embalm dead bodies.

SCARLETT: Dead bodies?? Where?!

JIMMY: (*In a creepy voice.*) They're everywhere.

SCARLETT yelps and grabs the bat from the floor, clutching it to her chest.

MUSTARD: Again, Jimmy. Not helping.

ARMANDO: I know that smell...

JIMMY: You've embalmed a dead body? Is that what they do for fun in your country?

ARMANDO: (*To JIMMY, deadpan.*) Yes.

JIMMY: (*Backing away nervously.*) Uh... Coach?

MUSTARD: Relax, Jimbo. He's just playing around. Right, Armando?

ARMANDO: No. I mean, yes. But I *have* smelled that smell before. In advanced biology.

MUSTARD: That's it! Dissection preservatives!

MUSTARD takes out his cell phone and starts texting.

JIMMY: What? What is it?

MUSTARD: I know where we should look next!

SCARLETT: Where?

ARMANDO: The science lab!

MUSTARD: Bingo! Let's go!

MUSTARD exits stage left. SCARLETT hurries after him, nervously looking around, bat in hand.

JIMMY: (*To ARMANDO.*) Not bad. For a soccer player.

ARMANDO: (*Putting a hand on JIMMY'S shoulder.*) I am also available for tutoring if you are interested.

JIMMY: Tutoring, huh? You any good at math?

ARMANDO: I can do algebra. I can even do geometry. But graphing is where I draw the line.

JIMMY: Hey! Armando! You just told your first American joke! Nice!

JIMMY slaps ARMANDO on the back and exits stage left.

ARMANDO: Joke? What joke?

ARMANDO hurries after JIMMY, exiting stage left. Lights fade.

SCENE 6

WORLD LANGUAGES CLASSROOM

AT START: *Lights rise. Desks form a circle at center stage where the FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLUB MEMBERS are hanging out, eating tortilla chips, styling hair, and chatting. They all wear matching club t-shirts. VIOLET, ROSE, PLUM, GREY, and GUS walk in tentatively from stage left.*

VIOLET: Hello? What's going on in here?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: Violet! Hi! Welcome! Are you here to join the Foreign Language Club?

GUS: You're having a club meeting? Now?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: *Si.*

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2: *Oui.*

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: *Ja.*

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4: Yep! (*MEMBERS 1-3 look at MEMBER 4.*) What? English is a language too.

GUS: Does everyone hang out at the school on a Friday night except me??

PLUM: I thought Foreign Language Club meetings were held on Wednesdays at four?

VIOLET: That's right! Armando would be so disappointed if he knew he was missing a meeting! He's in the building. I could get a message to him—

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBERS 1-4: No!

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: Please. Don't.

VIOLET, PLUM, ROSE, GUS, and GREY exchange glances.

PLUM: May we ask why not?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: Armando, he's a little...

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2: Loud?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: Annoying?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: Controlling?

GUS: Funny. Sounds like someone else I know.

GREY clears her throat loudly and glares at GUS.

GREY: *(To the FOREIGN CLUB MEMBERS.)* I must say, children, I'm disappointed in you. Armando Amarillo is a guest in our school, a foreign exchange student. And you of all people, the Foreign Language Club, should have been among the first to welcome him!

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: We were! I mean, we did! But then he came in and took over!

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2: He makes us spend the first fifteen minutes of every meeting conversing in different languages!

PLUM: Sounds like an excellent mental exercise!

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: We're required to memorize all the capitals of the world!

GREY: *(Tentatively.)* Well, that's... useful information.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4: What about all the flags of the world? Or each country's currency??

GUS: Just don't do it.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4: We have to! There's a quiz at the end of every meeting!

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: And if we don't get a high enough score, we'll get kicked out of the club!

GUS: So what?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: But it's our club!!

VIOLET: Wow. I had no idea! Armando always seems so charming at our meetings.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2: He's a monster.

GUS: A monster, huh?

PLUM: Please. He just has high academic standards. Frankly, I wish more schools in America would offer the rigor of a foreign education.

VIOLET: I don't know, Penelope. There might be something to this.

ROSE: *(To VIOLET.)* A clue?

VIOLET: Maybe. Anyways, it couldn't hurt to ask them some more questions.

PLUM: *(Opens the Spanish book with a sigh.)* Go ahead. At least I have a book.

PLUM sits down to read.

VIOLET: *(To GUS.)* What do you think, Gus? Am I way off base here?

GUS: Not at all. Go ahead. Interrogate away, Madam Dictator.

GREY clears her throat loudly.

GUS: I mean, Madam President.

VIOLET: *(Shaking her head.)* I don't know why I bother. *(Turning back to FOREIGN LANGUAGE CLUB MEMBERS.)* Has Armando ever said or done anything... unusual?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: That's a tough one. "Unusual" is kind of Armando's normal setting.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2: *(To FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1.)* Do you know he told me that he once wrestled an alligator?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: He said he's traveled the entire Amazon River from beginning to end by boat.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4: And he swears that it was his Great Aunt Rebecca who invented the tortilla chip.

GUS: Did she?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4: How should I know?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3: Who cares? So long as we get to keep eating them!

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 3 and 4 tap their chips together in a sort of high five and keep eating chips.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: *(To VIOLET.)* Armando doesn't let us eat during meetings. He says the loud crunching "distracts from the conversation."

PLUM: That and food in the classroom could lead to ants. We have the same rule in the Science Club.

VIOLET: Okay. So in summary, he's got a lot of rules and a big imagination. Unfortunately, that's... really not all that helpful.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: Well, one thing that's not imaginary? His soccer skills.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 4: Oh yeah. That part's true. He's got mad soccer skills.

VIOLET: Armando plays soccer? That's funny. I don't remember him playing on the soccer team.

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 1: Oh, he didn't. But you don't want to bring that up around him.

VIOLET: I don't?

FOREIGN CLUB MEMBER 2: No. He's still pretty angry about the whole delayed visa thing.

GREY: That's right! I had forgotten about that!

GUS: What happened?

GREY: Apparently last summer Armando's school had mailed out his application to enroll as an exchange student with us for the fall semester. But with the maelstrom that is Principal Black's desk, I suppose the application got lost. By the time the principal found it and processed it, it was already mid-September. And by the time Armando arrived...

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