

INEXORABLY INSEPARABLE FRIENDS BEYOND FRIENDS

By Alan Haehnel

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INEXORABLY INSEPARABLE FRIENDS BEYOND FRIENDS

A Comedic One Act Play

By Alan Haehnel

SYNOPSIS: Jillian and Aurey have been inseparable friends since grade school. With indulgent parents removing all obstacles, these besties have a great life. But when said parents attend a conference intended to teach them how to toughen up their spoiled children, Jillian and Aurey's world falls apart. All their previous dreams, so dependent on them remaining as a duo, come under threat. They're being required to do such horrible things as (gasp!) get jobs, earn decent grades, forgo phone time and even (double gasp!) go their separate ways! Near the end of their senior year, Jillian and Aurey have almost given in to despair, but their classmates find them, help them, tell their story and ultimately renew their hope in the future and their undying devotion to one another.

DURATION: 40 minutes.

TIME: Present Day.

SETTINGS: Various Locations. Neutral and simple set. An open stage or perhaps some boxes or platforms to provide for levels.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(4-13 females, 2-11 males, 0-9 either; doubling possible)

AUREY (f)..... Inseparable friend of Jillian.
(116 lines.)

JILLIAN (f)..... Inseparable friend of Aurey.
(127 lines)

E1 (f)..... Ensemble Member 1. (59 lines)

E2 (m)..... Ensemble Member 2. (56 lines)

E3 (m)..... Ensemble Member 3. (48 lines)

E4 (f)..... Ensemble Member 4. (42 lines)

ENSEMBLE CHARACTERS: The following characters are played by the Ensemble Members listed above.

MS. FLUDDERQUAT(f).....	Jillian and Aurey's grumpy grade school teacher. (9 lines)
JILLIAN'S MOM (f).....	The tiger type. (14 lines)
JILLIAN'S DAD (m)	The snowplow type. (25 lines)
AUREY'S MOM (f).....	The hovering type. (11 lines)
AUREY'S DAD (m)	The helicopter type. (9 lines)
LAWYER (m/f).....	Crafter of Jillian and Aurey's legally-binding IEP. (1 line)
BIFF (m).....	Uppercrust fantasy boyfriend; Bradley's best friend. (13 lines)
BRADLEY (m).....	Uppercrust fantasy boyfriend, Biff's best friend. (11 lines)
SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON (m/f)	Provides the "tick" and "tock" of Bradley and Biff's tennis match. (13 lines)
BABY AURELIA THE 1ST (f).....	Progeny of Aurey and Biff's fantasy family (2 lines)
BABY BRADLEY THE 5TH (m).....	Progeny of Jillian and Bradley's fantasy family. (2 lines)
TEACHER (m/f).....	Admiring teacher of Baby Aurelia the 1 ST and Baby Bradley the 5 th . (1 line)
REVEREND (m/f).....	Provides the marriage vows for the Jillian and Aurey's fantasy weddings. (1 line)
SPEAKER 1 (m/f)	Enthusiastic proponent of making kids tough. (17 lines)
SPEAKER 2 (m/f)	Enthusiast proponent of making kids tough. (14 lines)
JANICE (f)	The bored, bitter manager of Smudgeburger Fast Food. (6 lines)
THEO (m).....	A timid employee at Smudgeburger. (4 lines)
OLD MAN (m).....	A disgruntled senior citizen at Smudgeburger. (3 lines)

TIMER (m/f).....	Times Jillian and Aurey's burger-making accomplishment. (3 lines)
CLARA (m/f)	The owner of "Small Wonders" child-care center. (1 line)
RICH WOMAN 1 (f).....	Best friends with Rich Woman 2, client of "Small Wonders". (5 lines)
RICH WOMAN 2 (f).....	Best friends with Rich Woman 1, client of "Small Wonders". (6 lines)
GRAVE NARRATOR (m/f)	Fantasy-style narrator of Jillian and Aurey's woeful life. (2 lines)

CASTING NOTE

This play is quite flexible in casting. For larger casts, E1-E4 can be doubled to eight and each Ensemble Character can be cast separately.

OPTIONAL DOUBLING

The assignment of the characters to the ensemble members listed in the Cast of Characters should be taken as mere suggestion, not mandate. Who plays whom should vary according to the talents and needs of your particular group. Here is a possible breakdown of doubling:

E1:

JILLIAN'S MOM (f)
LAWYER (m/f)
BABY AURELIA THE 1ST (f)
SPEAKER 1 (m/f)
TIMER (m/f)
RICH WOMAN 2 (f)

E2:

JILLIAN'S DAD (m)
BRADLEY (m)

TEACHER (m/f)
REVEREND (m/f)
THEO (m)

E3

AUREY'S DAD (m)
BIFF (m)
BABY BRADLEY THE 5TH (m)
SPEAKER 2 (m/f)
OLD MAN (m)
GRAVE NARRATOR (m/f)

E4

MS. FLUDDERQUAT(f)
AUREY'S MOM (f)
SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON (m/f)
JANICE (f)
CLARA (m/f)
RICH WOMAN 1 (f)

PROPERTY LIST

None. Everything should be pantomimed.

SET

SETTINGS: High school track, on the pole vault mats, Grade-school classroom, Jillian's bedroom, Aurey's living room, Jillian's living room, Lawyer's office, Tennis court, Church, Conference stage, Smudgeburger Fast Food Place, "Small Wonders" child-care center

The setting list may look daunting, but I don't intend to have any production try to realistically shift locations using scene changes. The speed of the dialogue will simply not allow for that convention. Rather, the audience will quickly catch on that the context of the lines, perhaps combined with a simple move from one part of the stage to another, establishes a new setting. *With that in mind, the overall set for the play should be neutral and simple. It could be an open stage or perhaps some boxes or platforms to provide for levels.*

DIRECTOR’S NOTE: This play should be zippy and minimalist and, above all, fun. At its core, it’s a story within a story: The ensemble is telling us about how Aurey and Jillian told them their tale of friendship woes. And just like any enthusiastic group trying to relay a narrative, there is a lot of shifting of characters and voices and places—no time nor need for elaborate sets or props or costume changes. The play is a celebration of camaraderie, so that spirit should infuse the piece. All of the actors should stay onstage throughout the show, even, as suggested early in the play, using their bodies as chairs, beds, pole vault mats—anything that will enhance the connections amongst the players. If you choose to have people add little accoutrements to establish various characters (scarves, hats, wigs, for instance), the actors can don and doff those accessories in full view of the audience.

PREMIERE PRODUCTION

INEXORABLY INSEPARABLE FRIENDS BEYOND FRIENDS premiered on September 13, 2024 at Our Lady of Providence High School in Clarksville, Indiana and won the Regional Thespian Competition.

DIRECTOR.....Ellen Holifield
AUREY..... Brighton Sullivan
JILLIAN.....Stella Huber
ENSEMBLE 1Keira Chapin-Muth
 Janice, Speaker, Clara, Jillian’s Mom, Rich Woman
ENSEMBLE 2 Anderson Frey
 Biff, Old Man, Aurey’s Dad, Reverend, Judge
ENSEMBLE 3Preston Kist
 Bradley, Theo, Speaker, Jillian’s Dad
ENSEMBLE 4 Emma Embry
 Ms. Fludderquat, Aurey’s Mom, Rich Woman, Grave Narrator

Tech: Shayne Richards, Matt Wetzels, Emma Holifield

AT START: *Lights up on four ensemble members, E1, E2, E3 and E4 on hands and knees, heads down. Lying on top of them are JILLIAN and AUREY, facing the sky, crying loudly. Suddenly, the two stop crying. E1, E2, E3 and E4 look up.*

E1: Near the end of their senior year

E2: We found our two dear friends

E3: Lying prone on the pole vault mats

E4: In a pitiful pool of tears.

E1, E2, E3 and E4 put their heads back down; JILLIAN and AUREY resume their wailing for a brief moment, then stop again. E1, E2, E3 and E4 looks up.

E1: In a pitiful pool of tears, our Jillian and our Aurey!

E2: To find them in such a state of despair

E3: Was downright totally scary!

E4: And we wouldn't leave...

E1, E2, E3 and E4: We couldn't leave!

E4: Until we'd heard their story.

JILLIAN and AUREY rise, suddenly cheerful. E1, E2, E3 and E4 jump up.

JILLIAN: We're gonna get real!

AUREY: This is our spiel!

JILLIAN and AUREY: We are a package deal!

E1: These were the friends we knew!

E2: That rhyme they'd chanted since forever!

E3: Jillian and Aurey—inexorably inseparable...

E1, E2, E3 and E4: Friends beyond friends!

E4: Oh, yes, some had tried to break them apart, starting way back in 5th grade, January, the infamous mitochondria project.

E2: The teacher?

FULL CAST: Ms. Fludderquat.

MS. FLUDDERQUAT is played by one of the ENSEMBLE MEMBERS [E1, E2, E3, E4], as are all other characters besides AUREY and JILLIAN.

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: Aurey, Jillian, you will not be working together on this presentation.

AUREY: But...

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: Absolutely not!

JILLIAN: What if we...

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: If you two don't learn to branch out, expand your horizons and detach once in a while, well...

E1: She always did this—the big build-up to...

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: Well, I don't know what.

E2: Total dud.

JILLIAN and AUREY: *(To MS. FLUDDERQUAT.)* Please, please, please!

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: Bottom line: Nein! For the mitochondria project, you will find other partners! And that is final!

E3: So, they did what any industrious middle-schoolers would do.

E1: They ran to their over-indulgent parents—first to Jillian's house, then to Aurey's—and whined.

JILLIAN and AUREY: *(Ad libbed whining.)* Mom, it's not fair! We have to work together! Please! Ms. Fludderquat is so mean!

E2: Then, in both their houses, their child-centric parents conferred.

JILLIAN'S MOM, JILLIAN'S DAD, AUREY'S MOM, and AUREY'S

DAD: Mumble, mumble... damaging self esteem... mumble, mumble... threaten a lawsuit... mumble, mumble... have a talk with that Fludderquat... mumble, mumble... have to kick some butt... mumble, mumble.

E1: And...

E2: As is usually the case with such middle schoolers with such parents...

JILLIAN'S MOM, JILLIAN'S DAD, AUREY'S MOM, and AUREY'S

DAD: We took care of it.

JILLIAN and AUREY: We got our way!

E3: And...

E1: To ensure they never had to face such disappointment in school again...

E1, E2, E3 and E4: They got an IEP!

AUREY: IEP—individualized education plan.

JILLIAN: State-mandated individualized education plan.

LAWYER: The state hereby decrees that Aurey and Jillian, having been officially diagnosed with an overdependence disorder, shall never be compelled to work independent of one another. Ergo ipso facto e pluribus unum.

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: It appears, Jillian and Aurey, after further consideration and conferences with your parents' attorneys and the school board, that you will, in fact, be working together on the mitochondria project.

JILLIAN and AUREY: Yay! Thank you, Ms. Fludderquat.

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: But you mark my words, you two, the day is coming when reality is going to come crashing down, when you learn that not everything is going to go your way, and then...

AUREY: Yes, Mrs. Fludderquat?

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: Well...

JILLIAN: You were saying, Ms. Fludderquat?

MS. FLUDDERQUAT: Well, I don't know what. But something!

JILLIAN and AUREY: Thank you again, Ms. Fludderquat.

E1: Thus legally armed, their friendship infused virtually every activity throughout our school days.

E2: Tests, quizzes, papers...

E3: Oral reports, recitations...

E4: Labs, even rope climbing.

AUREY: I climbed half way...

JILLIAN: I climbed half way...

JILLIAN and AUREY: And we both got full credit!

E1: Ergo ipso facto...

E2: E pluribus unum.

AUREY: That may be Greek to you...

JILLIAN: But whatever you interpret or think or feel...

AUREY and JILLIAN: We are a package deal!

AUREY: Remember that day, near the end of our junior year, when we skipped class...

E3: Also part of their IEP—they could skip one class a week, as long as they did it together.

AUREY: And we laid out on the pole vault mats and just dreamed.

JILLIAN: We had it all figured out that day.

JILLIAN and AUREY lie down on top of E1, E2, E3 and E4 as they were at the beginning of the play.

AUREY: Feel that sun.

JILLIAN: Look at that sky.

AUREY: We're gonna be seniors next year!

JILLIAN: We are going to be accepted to every school on our list.

AUREY: And then, do you know what's going to happen? Oo, these mats are squishy.

JILLIAN: What's going to happen?

AUREY: We are going to get noticed by two very good friends.

JILLIAN: One will be Bradley.

AUREY: One will be Biff.

JILLIAN and AUREY: (*Dreamily.*) Bradley and Biff!

BIFF: Say, Bradley.

BRADLEY: Yo, Biff.

BIFF: What say you to a game of tennis, old chum?

BRADLEY: I say, absoolutely, posilutely.

BIFF and BRADLEY begin to pantomime playing tennis. SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON makes the sounds of them hitting the ball.

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock, tock, tock, tock.

BIFF: I say, Bradley.

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BRADLEY: What's that, Biff?

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF: Did you happen to notice...

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF: ...those two lovelies...

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF: ...in our Intro. To Bigwigery class?

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BRADLEY: Nice shot, old boy.

BIFF: Thank you, old boy.

BRADLEY: Do you happen to be talking about those two hot commodities, Jillian and Aurey, perchance?

BIFF: Precisely the ones, Bradley. Service!

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BRADLEY: Hard not to notice those two.

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF: Joined at the lovely hips, those two.

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BRADLEY: Kind of like us.

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF: Say!

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BRADLEY: I'm picking up what you're putting down, Biff.

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF and BRADLEY: How about doubles?

SOUND EFFECT'S PERSON: Tock.

BIFF: Aha! Game!

BRADLEY: Set!

BIFF and BRADLEY: A perfect match!

JILLIAN: Biff.

AUREY: Bradley.

JILLIAN: The most gorgeous double wedding...

AUREY: The most spectacular double honeymoon...

JILLIAN: Side-by-side houses.

AUREY: Bradley and Biff: Partners in the same law firm.

JILLIAN: You and I: Partners in the same amazingly-successful mail-order business selling our custom-made...

AUREY: Cupcakes!

JILLIAN: Q-tip dispensers!

AUREY: Bug zappers!

JILLIAN and AUREY: All of the above and more!

JILLIAN: Rich.

AUREY: Beautiful.

JILLIAN and AUREY: Completely and utterly successful!

JILLIAN: But not quite fulfilled.

AUREY: Oh, no! What more will we possibly need?

JILLIAN and AUREY: Our babies.

E1 and E2 pantomime cradling children. E3 and E4 assume the roles of BABY AURELIA THE 1ST and BABY BRADLEY THE 5TH, lying on the floor and reacting as if being adored.

JILLIAN: My beautiful boy, Bradley the fifth.

AUREY: My spectacular girl, Aurelia Dawn Scottsdale Hyperia Agnus Dingle, the first.

JILLIAN: And we'll watch our friendship embodied in our children as they learn to crawl...

AUREY: To stand...

JILLIAN: To take their first steps...

AUREY: To say their first word:

BABY AURELIA THE 1ST and BABY BRADLEY THE 5TH: Scin-till-a-ting.

AUREY: On through pre-school, middle school, high school, their teachers will be amazed.

TEACHER: What amazing students they are!

AUREY: Until finally...

JILLIAN: After earning their doctorates and establishing themselves professionally...

AUREY: Our children will become the ultimate testament to our iron-clad bond as friends. Our offspring will unite in holy matrimony.

REVEREND: Marriage. Do you, Bradley the 5th, and you, Aurelia Dawn Scottsdale Hyperia Agnus Dingle the 1st, take one another to be lawfully wedded husband and wife and ultimate testaments to your mothers' iron-clad bond as friends?

BABY AURELIA THE 1ST and BABY BRADLEY THE 5TH: We suuuure do!

E4: Yes, that day, lying on those mats, Jillian and Aurey dreamt of becoming...

E1: Totally, completely...

E2: Utterly, undeniably...

E1, E2, E3 and E4: Awesome!

E3: But then, in the summer before their senior year, they came hurtling down from their dream-land amongst the stars...

E4: To land with a splat on the bare pavement of reality.

E1, E2, E3 and E4: The conference!

E1: That fateful summer, their parents attended a conference together.

E2: A conference entitled: “Entitled—How Modern Parenting Has Cursed Our Children.”

E3: Where there were some very convincing speakers.

SPEAKER 1: Do we love them?

SPEAKER 2: Unquestionably!

SPEAKER 1: Out of love, though, we have bubble wrapped and coddled these young people!

SPEAKER 2: We have created blown-glass children primed for shattering!

SPEAKER 1: Out of love, parents, we must do the hardest thing, what may even feel like cruelty.

SPEAKER 2: We must thrust them from the nest, let life teach them they can be tough.

SPEAKER 1: Will it be hard to watch?

SPEAKER 2: Unquestionably!

SPEAKER 1: But, in the end, will they thank you?

SPEAKER 1 and SPEAKER 2: They will!

E1: When both sets of parents returned from their conference...

E2: Their cultish weekend where they transformed from reasonable people into childhood-sucking vampires...

JILLIAN'S MOM, JILLIAN'S DAD, AUREY'S MOM and AUREY'S DAD: Mumble, mumble, mumble...being too indulgent...mumble, mumble...got to cut the cord...mumble, mumble...have to grow up sometime...mumble, mumble...

AUREY: This was dangerous! If we weren't careful, these conference-addled parents were going to turn around and tell us...

JILLIAN'S MOM, JILLIAN'S DAD, AUREY'S MOM, and AUREY'S DAD: (*Getting increasingly louder.*) Mumble, mumble, mumble, mumble, mumble...Get a job, you two!

JILLIAN and AUREY: But, but, but...

AUREY: We're your little kumquats.

JILLIAN: Your precious tomatoes.

E1: Despite their desperate pleadings...

E2: Despite, even their widest eyes and most quivering lips...

JILLIAN and AUREY demonstrate their widest eyes and most quivering lips.

E3: Both sets of parents remained resolute.

JILLIAN'S DAD: Hit the road, kids!

AUREY'S MOM: You're tough—go get 'em!

JILLIAN'S MOM, JILLIAN'S DAD, AUREY'S MOM and AUREY'S DAD: And don't come back 'til you're gainfully employed.

E1: No cars until they could pay for the gas.

E2: No brand-name, high-priced colleges unless they got scholarships for their stellar grades or outstanding achievements.

E1, E2, E3 and E4: Neither of which they had.

E1: Even the worst thing of all:

E1, E2, E3 and E4: No phones!

JILLIAN and AUREY freeze in a gesture of supplication to the heavens.

E2: After several tearful hours sitting on the curb...

E3: Under a lone streetlamp...

E4: At the intersection of Lonely Street and Desolation Avenue...

JILLIAN and AUREY: Well...(Look at one another, then out front.)
Guess we gotta get a job.

E1, E2, E3 and E4: However!

E1: This is Aurey and Jillian we're talking about!

E2: The Power Pair!

E3: The Bogo's Logo!

E4: The Double the Trouble Couple, the Chop Suey Duet who will never quit, who will do it to it every single time.

JILLIAN and AUREY: Mmmm-hmmm.

JILLIAN: Do not bother coming to us with an offer of employment unless you can answer yes to the following questions.

AUREY: Are you willing to simultaneously hire both of us and grant us identical shifts?

JILLIAN: Will you honor our needs for creativity and respectability?

AUREY: Can you afford to pay us a minimum of...

JILLIAN and AUREY huddle for a few seconds, calculating, then turn out.

JILLIAN and AUREY: \$22.50?

JILLIAN: Will your uniform be flattering?

AUREY: If you answer any of the above questions in the negative, don't bother calling.

JILLIAN: If, on the other hand, you are the type of progressive organization that answers yes every time, then...

JILLIAN and AUREY: You have a job for us!

E1: They posted their ad on Facebook and Twitter...

E2: On Youtube and Snapchat...

E3: Everywhere and anywhere civilized people would look.

E4: They went to bed that night wondering how they were going to sort through the hundreds of offers they were sure to get.

E1: They woke up that morning, checked their computers...

E2: Not their phones. They didn't have their phones.

E3: And saw...

JILLIAN and AUREY: Nothing.

E4: And heard...

JILLIAN and AUREY: Crickets.

E1: And felt...

JILLIAN and AUREY: Utterly unloved.

JILLIAN: One night during this dark period, I was sitting on my bed contemplating a Kickstarter campaign called "Fund the Greatest Duo in the World Because We're Super Cute" when I heard a strange whisper coming from beneath me.

JILLIAN'S DAD: Psst, Jillian!

JILLIAN: If you're a creeper, you should know I have a loaded machine gun under my pillow. I can whip it out and shoot you to ribbons in a matter of seconds.

JILLIAN'S DAD: Pookie, I'm not a creeper. I'm your dad.

JILLIAN: Daddy? What are you doing under there?

JILLIAN'S DAD: I wanted to talk to you, but I don't want your mother to know.

JILLIAN: Why not?

JILLIAN'S DAD: Pookie, it's a little complicated.

JILLIAN: Don't call me Pookie.

JILLIAN'S DAD: But, as my pet name for you, it reinforces our bond of affection.

JILLIAN: You lost your Pookies privileges.

JILLIAN'S DAD: Listen, Poo... Jillian, about the conference. Your mother is a bit more... committed to the whole concept than I ever was.

JILLIAN: Daddy, I want things back like they were.

JILLIAN'S DAD: That is, while I agree in principle...

JILLIAN: Daddy, if you want your Pookie back, Pookie needs her stuff back. Capiche?

JILLIAN'S DAD: I got you and Aurey a job. *(Pause.)* Don't tell your mother.

JILLIAN: You what?

JILLIAN'S DAD: I know you've been trying. I saw your posts on Facebook and Twitter and Snapchat and...

JILLIAN: Daddy, why are you stalking me?

JILLIAN'S DAD: It's not stalking. It's modern parenting. And a hobby, to a slight degree. Now...

JILLIAN: What kind of a job? Does it answer yes to all our crucial questions?

JILLIAN'S DAD: Yes.

JILLIAN: Perfect!

JILLIAN'S DAD: To some degree.

JILLIAN: To what degree, exactly, Father?

JILLIAN'S DAD: You and Aurey are both hired, and you get to work the same hours! That's the best I could do. *(JILLIAN says nothing.)* Pookie? Jillian? Your silence is making me decidedly uncomfortable. Not to mention the floor. Have you ever vacuumed under here?

JILLIAN: Father. Where. Is. This. Job?

JILLIAN'S DAD: Well, as you might be aware, I have a client named Jacob Smudgey. He happens to own a chain of...

JILLIAN: Smudgeburger? You want us to work at Smudgeburger?

JILLIAN'S DAD: Now, Pookie, it's good, honest work, and...

E1: And when Jillian told Aurey with the news...

AUREY: Smudgeburger!? That place does not encourage creativity! That place does the opposite of encourage creativity! It kills brain cells, Jillian.

E2: Despite their hours-long diatribe against their new and heinous place of employment...

E3: Aurey and Jillian, two short nights later, found themselves where they never dreamt they would be.

JILLIAN and AUREY face straight out and speak together.

AUREY and JILLIAN: Welcome to Smudgeburger. Have you tried our world-famous Smudgestack Bacon Bomb?

E4: Within the very first hour of the very first day, even the one criterion Smudgeburger fulfilled—that Jillian and Aurey would work together—was violated by their manager, the lovely Janice.

JANICE: Yeah, listen, you got the uniforms on. Good. They fit you like crap. Good. Listen, I need one of you on the register and one of you working the back line.

AUREY: Oh, I'm sorry, but we have an IEP that says we do everything together.

JILLIAN: We'll either both be on register or both be on the back line.

AUREY and JILLIAN: We can't be separated.

JANICE: Yeah, Gory, Gilligan, you two can take your STP or your STD...

AUREY: But you don't seem to understand that...

JANICE: Oh, I understand, all right! I understand that you, Gory, are on register, and you, Gilligan, are on the back line. So go!

JILLIAN: But...

JANICE: Now!

E2: Their shock at encountering tyranny from a manager barely one year their senior forced them into submission. After very brief training sessions on the register...

JANICE: (To AUREY.) The customer wants that, you push this button; the customer wants this, you push that button; this, you ring that bell; that, you reach behind the counter and hand her a ketchup packet. Good. Your hat's on backwards.

E3: And on the back line...

JANICE: (To JILLIAN.) So listen, pickles you have to pay attention to. Close attention. Pickles go on lots of things, but they don't go on everything. Pickles will put you into a pickle. That's a joke. You should laugh at that, especially if one of the managers makes it. Your collar's sticking up.

E4: Somehow, after only five minutes of this goes here and that goes there and pickles will determine your life, they were supposed to be ready for flesh-and-blood Smudgeburger customers.

E1: The first fifteen minutes were great. Aurey munched a Hardy Lardy Smudgefry, leaned against the counter of her workspace and thought...

AUREY: Hey, this isn't so bad.

E2: She barely got that thought out when her co-worker, Theo, who was probably twelve and had more acne than face, told her...

THEO enters.

THEO: Like, you might want to know that eating while you're punched is, like, a major crime at Smudgeburger. You could get docked, like, a dollar per Smudgefry.

AUREY: You're not going to tell on me, are you?

THEO: I might have to, if, like, Janice sees you and sees me, like, seeing you. You will probably only get docked a dollar because you're, like, pretty new, but I'll get docked, like, two dollars because I didn't, like, report you.

AUREY: So much for free food.

THEO: Plus the food sucks. Uh-oh.

AUREY: What?

THEO: Bus. Battle stations!

E3: Trial by fire? No. Trial by Fryolator.

E4: Trial by grease.

E1: Trial by a bus full of hyped-up senior citizens wanting a quick meal before heading to the gambling casino.

JILLIAN: I look up at the screen at this cascade of orders, all written in some alien code that makes no sense to me.

AUREY: I look up from my register to see the lobby jammed with a mass of loud, rabid human beings.

JILLIAN and AUREY: What do they want from me?!

JILLIAN: And the whole time I'm trying not to be overcome by the pandemonium, a big part of my brain is thinking, where is my Aurey?

AUREY: Mine is screaming, where is my Jillian as I'm facing my first dissatisfied customer?

OLD MAN enters.

OLD MAN: I ordered a Massive SmudgeWad! I didn't order a Chicken PluckSmudge! They make my throat close up! The last time I tried to eat one of those, they had to call 9-1-1!

AUREY: Sir, I am very sorry. I was sure you had ordered the PluckSmudge, but I am new here...

OLD MAN: You calling me a liar?

AUREY: No, sir, not at all.

OLD MAN: Tell you what, Missy. You go ahead and pop a SmudgeWad in a bag for me along with one of them gift certificates for, say, 25 dollars, and I'll get out of your hair. What do you say to that?

E1: What Aury said to that was...

AUREY: Uh, sir, I, um, uh...

E2: What she wanted to say was...

E3: Exactly the same thing Jillian wanted to say when Janice told her for the 87th time that she needed to go faster...

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