

THIS SPEECH CONTEST HAS BEEN CANCELLED

by Ken Bradbury

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SYNOPSIS: What a nightmare! Imagine what would happen if your duet partner didn't show up on the day of the speech contest. Learn how this participant copes.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(2 either)

PALMER (m/f) *(74 lines)*

RAGAN (m/f) *(73 lines)*

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PALMER: *(Entering.)* That's it! Hold everything! Stop it! The speech contest has been cancelled! *(To the audience.)* You folks can go home now. *(To the judge.)* You can pick up your check in the office! Go ahead! Go home! Go home!

RAGAN: *(Running in.)* What're you doing?

PALMER: I'm cancelling the speech contest.

RAGAN: You're doing what?

PALMER: Cancelling the whole thing. It's over... done with. Bing-bang, ya-da, ya-da, we're out of here!

RAGAN: *(To the audience.)* Uh... excuse us a moment. *(Pulling Palmer aside.)* Are you crazy? You can't do this!

PALMER: Oh, I'm pretty sure I can. I'm pretty sure I just did. *(To the audience.)* What are you waiting for? The show's over.

RAGAN: *(To the audience.)* He's/She's kidding. Would you stop that? This school is filled with kids today. You can't send everybody home. What's the matter?

PALMER: My partner.

RAGAN: What about your partner?

PALMER: He's not here. Bubba's a no-show.

RAGAN: Oh, no.

PALMER: Oh, yes. I knew this was gonna happen. He cancels every rehearsal and last night he still didn't have his lines down.

RAGAN: Maybe he's sick.

PALMER: He's not sick. He's a jerk. He did this to me last year. He came to contest and stumbled around and we got last place.

RAGAN: So why'd you pick him as a partner again?

PALMER: Because we always practice at his house and his mom makes really good pizza.

RAGAN: You're kidding.

PALMER: And he's got the biggest TV set in the world.

RAGAN: I'm not hearing this.

PALMER: And his sister/brother is really cute.

RAGAN: Oh good grief. You mean you pick Bubba for a partner but he's got no talent?

PALMER: She uses three kinds of cheese on her pizza.

RAGAN: But he can't act?

PALMER: And his brother/sister's drop-dead gorgeous.

RAGAN: You know, you deserve this. You deserve everything you've got coming to you. You should pick a speech partner because they work hard and they're talented.

PALMER: I just found that out. (*To the audience.*) Seriously folks, there's no need for you to hang around any longer.

RAGAN: Hold it! Hold it! Just because you can't perform that doesn't mean all the other kids can't compete today.

PALMER: But what's a speech contest without me?

RAGAN: A speech contest without you.

PALMER: You are doing serious damage to my ego.

RAGAN: I'm going to do serious damage to the back of your head if you don't stop this.

PALMER: Then tell me... Just what am I supposed to do?

RAGAN: Just... you know... walk around, see some speeches, encourage your friends.

PALMER: Oh sure. What are you doing in contest today? "I'm doing a monologue!" "I've got a great duet!" "I'm doing poetry!" Then they look at me... Uh... let's see... I got a drink at the water fountain, I found a nametag in the hallway, and I got really excited by eating a bag of popcorn that I found on the lunchroom table. Yeah. I'm having a great day.

RAGAN: Look, maybe your partner will show up at the last minute.

PALMER: It's already the last minute. Hey! Wow! Why I didn't I think of this before? I just got the greatest idea! You!

RAGAN: Me? Me? What?

PALMER: You! You're my new partner!

RAGAN: You're nuts.

PALMER: Of course I am. I'm an actor. Come on, you can do it!

RAGAN: You're out of your mind! I don't know Bubba's lines!

PALMER: You can do it! Really! I'll help you through it! I give you cues! Just follow me!

RAGAN: No way!

PALMER: We can do this! Come on! I've just got to perform at speech contest and you're my only hope! My life will be ruined if you don't say yes!

RAGAN: Ruined?

PALMER: At least dented a little.

RAGAN: But the judge... the audience... they'll know.

PALMER: *(Stops, walks over and views the audience closely.)* This group? No, I don't think so. Come on! Please! We're up next!

RAGAN: I can't... *(But PALMER grabs RAGAN and places him/her into position in front of the audience.)*

PALMER: Hi. My name is Palmer Gordon and this is my partner Ragan and we are doing "A Pirate's Life," by Ben Kradbury.

RAGAN: Who?

PALMER: Just follow me. *(Quickly becoming a pirate.)* Oh, 'tis a stormy, stormy day, Blackliver! *(Whispers.)* 'Tis indeed, Captain!

RAGAN: 'Tis indeed, Captain!

PALMER: Look through your telescope, you scurvy dog! Tell me what you see!

RAGAN: *(Peers through an imaginary scope.)* A speech judge!

PALMER: *(Aside.)* No! "Her Majesty's fleet!"

RAGAN: Her Majesty's fleet!

PALMER: And what's it doing?

RAGAN: Just sitting there looking at us.

PALMER: *(Aside.)* Wrong! "It's coming right at us, Captain!"

RAGAN: "It's coming right at us, Captain!" And they've got swords!

PALMER: *(Aside.)* Cannons.

RAGAN: "Cannons!" ...and knives!

PALMER: *(Aside.)* Stop ad-libbing! They don't have knives!

RAGAN: Oh, no! They dropped their knives! And the water is full of whales!

PALMER: *(Aside.)* Sharks!

RAGAN: "Sharks!" Vicious man-eating tiger sharks!

PALMER: *(Aside.)* Orcas!

RAGAN: "Orcas!" The size of whales!

PALMER: Avast, Blackliver! What's that I see on the far horizon?

RAGAN: I have no idea.

PALMER: *(Aside.)* A typhoon!

RAGAN: A tycoon!

PALMER: *(Aside.)* Phoon! Phoon!

RAGAN: "Phoon! Phoon!"

PALMER: Hoist the mainsail, Blackliver!

RAGAN: The what?

PALMER: The main sail!

RAGAN: Which sail is that?

PALMER: The main one!

RAGAN: Oh. Okay! Then I'll start the motor!

PALMER: We don't have no bloody motor, you dog!

RAGAN: Someone stole our motor! Oh, Captain, whatever shall we do?

PALMER: (*Aside.*) Stick to the script.

RAGAN: "Stick to the script! Stick to the script!" Captain, we must hoist the main sail, look for the motor, then stick to the script before the Phoon-Phoons capture us!

PALMER: (*A long, dastardly glare at RAGAN, then.*) They're coming aboard!

RAGAN: The Phoon-Phoons?

PALMER: No, you bloody idiot! Her Majesty's soldiers! Quick! Grab your sword!

RAGAN: (*Picks up something, cocks and fires.*) Bang!

PALMER: (*Another long look, then.*) Your sword! Sword!

RAGAN: My sword-sword! My sword-sword! I shall stab a Phoon-Phoon with my sword-sword!

PALMER: Attack! (*And both begin sword fighting with their imaginary attackers.*)

RAGAN: (*Singing.*) "Somewhere... over the rainbow!"

PALMER: (*Aside.*) What are you doing?

RAGAN: Hey, I'm really getting into this! I should have gone out for speech years ago!

PALMER: You're ruining my duet!

RAGAN: (*As they continue to fight.*) I'm having a ball! Take that, Phoon-Phoon! And that! And that!

PALMER: This is awful. I should have stayed home.

RAGAN: (*Really getting into it.*) Oh, thou most wretched wretch! Thou vilest of villains! Thou baddest of bad guys!

PALMER: Hey!

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