

TROUBLESHOOTING

By Bradley Hayward

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SYNOPSIS

What's the best way to get out of trouble? Motivational speakers Ken and Barbie have just the answer in their latest lecture series, "Troubleshooting for Teens." What starts out as a few harmless tips for teenagers in trouble, including tap dancing as a way to avoid detention, quickly turns dangerous when Ken's advice grows increasingly delusional as the evening wears on. Barbie's own troubleshooting skills are put to the test when Ken loses his mind and starts encouraging the audience to take the law into their own hands. Barbie soon discovers that trying to get out of trouble might be more trouble than it's worth!

CHARACTERS

(Entirely gender flexible cast of 6–20)

KEN	Cheesy motivational speaker, any age
BARBIE	Cheerful motivational speaker, any age
BRYCE	Teenager in trouble with school
TEACHER	Strict math teacher
MIRANDA	Teenager in trouble with family
MOM	Miranda's bossy mother
DAD	Miranda's cheapskate father
SISTER	Miranda's whiny kid sister
AMBER	Teenager in trouble with love
PAUL	Amber's boyfriend, teenager
STACEY	Amber's nemesis, teenager
PARENT	Exasperated mother/father
TODDLER 1	Spoiled rotten brat, child

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TODDLER 2	Spoiled rotten brat, child
GRANDMA	Really old lady
SNAKE CHARMER	Exotic hypnotist, any age
THUG	Teenager in trouble with the law
DELINQUENT	Teenager in trouble with the law
COP 1	Rent-a-cop, any age
COP 2	Rent-a-cop, any age

FLEXIBLE CASTING

All of the roles are gender flexible. Simply change the names, pronouns, and gender specific dialogue at your discretion. It is also perfectly acceptable (and encouraged) to have actors portray both genders.

Ken and Barbie are the only two characters who appear throughout the play. Each of the other roles may be cast individually, or a small ensemble of actors (as few as four) may play them all.

As written, there is a hint of romantic tension between Ken and Barbie; however, if the roles are cast with actors of the same gender, it would be just as effective to have this tension played as a rivalry between friends.

If Ken and Barbie are played by two females, they become Skipper and Barbie. If played by two males, they become Ken and Joe.

DURATION

Approximately 30 minutes

PRODUCTION NOTES

SET

The production design may be as simple or elaborate as you wish. The play could be produced on a bare stage with just a few chairs, which makes it an excellent choice for tours or competitions. It may also be produced on a much larger scale, with fully realized settings, costumes, and effects.

It is extremely important that there not be any extended scene changes or blackouts. The play works best if presented at a steady clip.

COSTUMES

The cast of the original workshop production wore all black, adding a few simple accessories to suggest each character. For example, the Cops wore holsters, the Snake Charmer wore a turban, Grandma wore a shawl, etc. This approach would be ideal for touring productions and competitions.

The first fully staged production was far more elaborate, with over-the-top costumes typical to each character "type." For example, Ken and Barbie were dressed exactly as the dolls, and the Toddlers stuck their heads through holes cut out of baby car seats (with doll bodies in the seats). All of the other characters were dressed equally as goofy.

There is very little danger of making this script too broad or too silly, so don't be afraid to come up as many outrageous ideas as possible!

PROPERTIES – PERSONAL

Enormous "Troubleshooting for Teens" book – this prop could be made out of cardboard, Styrofoam, paper mache, or any other materials you can find, but it should be at least as large as the actress playing Barbie.

Top hat
Plates, bowls, cutlery
Bag of cookies
Bucket of popcorn

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Miniature (doll-sized) “Troubleshooting for Teens” book
Walking cane
Turban
Flute
Ankle bracelet
Two ski masks
Two cans of spray paint
Two flashlights
Handcuffs

PRODUCTION HISTORY

Troubleshooting was originally produced by Charles Henderson High School in Troy, Alabama. It was directed by Laura Cain, assisted by Alex McLendon and Chelsea Carr, with the following cast.

KEN	Greyson Motes
BARBIE	Sydney Schroeder
BRYCE	Jonathan Carswell
TEACHER	Kendra Hampton
MIRANDA	Amber Taylor
MOM	Lisa Baugh
DAD	Kris Jordan
SISTER	Kacie Gibbons
AMBER	Amber Taylor
PAUL	Jonathan Carswell
STACEY	Kendra Hampton
PARENT	Hannah Gordon
TODDLER 1	Kacie Gibbons
TODDLER 2	Jocelyn Jointer
GRANDPA	Kris Jordan
SNAKE CHARMER	Kendra Hampton
THUG	Jonathan Carswell
DELINQUENT	Key'Ousha Foster
COP 1	Amber Taylor
COP 2	Jocelyn Jointer

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AT RISE: The lights rise CS on KEN and BARBIE, two cheesy motivational speakers. THEY are overflowing with energy and have fake smiles permanently plastered on their faces.

KEN: Hello, ladies!

BARBIE: Hello, gents!

BARBIE / KEN: And hello, everyone in between!

BARBIE: I'm Barbie!

KEN: And I'm Ken!

BARBIE: I know what you must be thinking.

KEN: Ken?

BARBIE: Barbie?

BARBIE / KEN: They're not dolls!

BARBIE: And you would be right.

KEN: Mostly right, Barbie.

BARBIE: Whatever do you mean, Ken?

KEN: You might not be made of vinyl, but you're still a doll.

BARBIE: Awww! So are you, Ken. So are you.

KEN: You really mean that?

BARBIE: I sure do. Even if you are anatomically correct.

KEN: No ifs about it, Barbie. My anatomy is 100% correct.

BARBIE: I'll just have to take your word for it!

KEN: So, Barbie.

BARBIE: Yes, Ken?

KEN: *(indicates the audience)* I bet the audience out there is wondering why we're here.

BARBIE: I bet they are. Otherwise, they're just a bunch of morons facing in one direction for no apparent reason.

KEN: So why are we here, Barbie?

BARBIE: Boy, am I glad you asked! We're here –

KEN: To help teenagers –

BARBIE: Get out of –

BARBIE / KEN: TROUBLE!

BARBIE: That's right. Teenagers are always getting into trouble.

KEN: Teenagers like... *(points into the audience)* ...YOU!

BARBIE: And YOU!

KEN: And YOU!

BARBIE: And YOU!

KEN: And YOU!

BARBIE: That's right, folks. We're talking to –

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BARBIE / KEN: YOU!

KEN: We're here to show you our handy dandy guide to getting out of trouble –

BARBIE / KEN: And staying that way!

KEN: What's that, you ask?

BARBIE: A guide?

KEN: You said it, Barbie! "Troubleshooting for Teens."

BARBIE: A how-to book for when you mess up.

KEN: For when you screw up.

BARBIE: For when you smell something funky and there's no dog to blame it on.

KEN: I know what you must be thinking.

BARBIE: Teenagers are always messing up and screwing up and stinking up. That must be one big book!

KEN: Big it is, Barbie.

BARBIE: A big, big book for when you get into big, big trouble!

KEN: Why don't you fetch a copy to show the audience?

BARBIE: Will do, Ken. Fetching is my favorite! (BARBIE exits.)

KEN: For the low price of only \$19.95... (whispers) ...plus shipping and handling... (aloud) ...you can be trouble free in no time! And if you don't believe me, we've got some absolutely true, completely real, far-from-bogus customer testimonials to share with you this evening.

(BARBIE returns, struggling to carry on an enormous book that's bigger than SHE is.)

BARBIE: Here it is, folks!

KEN: Oh my! That's one big book! Can I give you a hand?

BARBIE: No need, Ken. I carry the weight of the world on my shoulders so that you don't have to!

(SHE arrives CS and plops the book down. The title reads "Troubleshooting for Teens." THEY make dramatic hand gestures around it, like game show models would around a new car.)

KEN: Ooooooooo!

BARBIE: Ahhhhhhhh!

KEN: Just look at that book.

BARBIE: I'm looking! I'm looking!

KEN: Smell it.

BARBIE: I'm smelling! I'm smelling!

(THEY sniff the book.)

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KEN: And what does it smell like?

BARBIE: It smells like trouble.

KEN: And what do we do when we find trouble?

BARBIE: We shoot it.

BARBIE / KEN: Bang, bang!

BARBIE: Say, Ken?

KEN: Yes, Barbie?

BARBIE: Have you ever been in trouble?

KEN: Have I ever been in trouble? *(HE laughs.)* Is the sky blue?

BARBIE: What did you do?

KEN: That's for me to know and you to find out. *(HE quickly changes the subject.)* Moving on! Let's show the good folks out there exactly what our book is all about.

BARBIE: Let's, Ken. Let's!

KEN: You know what, Barbie?

BARBIE: What's that?

KEN: I'm so excited that I could pee my pants.

BARBIE: I already have!

(THEY high five.)

KEN: Let us introduce you to Bryce, just one of our many satisfied customers.

BARBIE: Who's Bryce?

KEN: This is!

(With a flourish, HE points SR and the lights rise on BRYCE. HE is frozen, sitting in a desk with a horrified look on his face.)

KEN: Meet Bryce. A teenager in trouble.

BARBIE: *(whispering enthusiastically)* Trouble, trouble, trouble.

KEN: Just look at his face. Look at it! He's either in a whole lot of trouble –

BARBIE: Trouble, trouble.

KEN: Or else he just sat on a thumb tack.

BARBIE: Trouble!

KEN: Let's find out!

BARBIE / KEN: Trouble!

(BRYCE unfreezes and speaks to the audience.)

BRYCE: I am in soooooo much trouble! My math teacher just caught me cheating on a test. I know I shouldn't have done it, but learning is hard! So I wrote the answers on my hand. Look. *(HE holds up his*

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hand and there is writing all over it.) I might have got away with it, but my hand is pretty small, so I also had to write some of the answers on my leg. *(HE lifts up his pant leg and it's covered in ink.)* I figured if I got stumped, I could casually scratch my leg and take a peek. And I probably could have got away with that too, but there were an awful lot of questions. So I wrote even more answers on my belly. *(HE lifts up his shirt and there are math equations scribbled all over his belly.)* That's what did me in. You can only check out your own body so many times before the teacher starts to think you're a pervert.

(TEACHER storms in SR, waving a finger in BRYCE's face.)

TEACHER: How dare you cheat on my test! What's your problem?

Where's your head? Who put you up to this? Explain yourself!

BRYCE: Thank goodness for Ken and Barbie. Their totally awesome, totally amazing book saved the day.

(THEY freeze as KEN and BARBIE bask in their imaginary glory.)

BARBIE: Did you hear that, Ken?

KEN: I sure did, Barbie.

BARBIE: "Troubleshooting for Teens" to the rescue.

KEN: But how?

BARBIE: Let's take a look inside the book and find out.

(SHE grunts loudly as SHE tries to pry open the heavy cover.)

KEN: Can I help you with that?

BARBIE: Nope. I'll get it so that you don't get angry.

KEN: *(points inside the book)* Well, lookie what we have here.

BARBIE: Chapter one.

BARBIE / KEN: "Trouble With School."

KEN: What to do when you get caught cheating.

BARBIE: Step one. Sing.

(BRYCE unfreezes and starts to sing.)

BRYCE: The Camptown ladies sing this song,
Doo dah, doo dah!

TEACHER: What are you doing?

BRYCE: The Camptown racetrack's five miles long,
Oh, da doo dah day!

TEACHER: Why are you singing?

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BRYCE: Gonna run all night!

Gonna run all day!

TEACHER: Stop it!

BRYCE: I bet my money on the bob-tailed nag.

Somebody bet on the gray!

TEACHER: I said, STOP!

(THEY freeze.)

KEN: Step two. Tap dance.

BARBIE: Tap dance?

KEN: That's right! A confused teacher is a happy teacher.

BARBIE: Hit it!

(BRYCE unfreezes, puts on a top hat, and starts tap dancing around TEACHER.)

BRYCE: I win my money on the bob-tailed nag.

Doo dah, doo dah!

TEACHER: I don't know why you're doing this.

BRYCE: I keep my money in an old tow-bag.

Oh, da doo dah day!

TEACHER: But I know that I love it!

BARBIE / KEN: Everybody!

(BRYCE and TEACHER tap dance together.)

BRYCE / TEACHER: Gonna run all night!

Gonna run all day!

I bet my money on the bob-tailed nag.

Somebody bet on the gray!

(THEY end with jazz hands as the lights fade SR. KEN and BARBIE are extremely self-satisfied.)

KEN: Well, would you look at that!

BARBIE: Ah-mazing!

KEN: In and out of trouble in sixty seconds flat. That's the power of this book.

BARBIE: Remember. When you're in trouble –

KEN: Shoot it.

BARBIE / KEN: Bang, bang!

KEN: Moving on.

BARBIE: You mean there's more?

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KEN: Of course there's more! School isn't the only place teenagers get into trouble.

BARBIE: You don't have to tell me twice.

KEN: Where have you gotten into trouble?

BARBIE: The better question is, where haven't I?

KEN: Naughty girl!

BARBIE: Have you ever been in trouble, Ken?

KEN: *(laughs)* Is a frog's butt water tight?

BARBIE: What did you do?

KEN: Doesn't matter. Let's just skip ahead to the next chapter, shall we?

BARBIE: We shall!

(SHE frantically flips through the book.)

KEN: Do you need me to find it for you?

BARBIE: Not at all. I flip the pages so that you don't flip out and smack me around!

(THEY share a good laugh over this.)

KEN: Thatta girl.

BARBIE: Ah ha! Here it is! Chapter two.

BARBIE / KEN: "Trouble With Family."

BARBIE: Do your parents tick you off?

KEN: Does your sister snoop in your bedroom?

BARBIE: Does your brother eat all the food in the refrigerator?

KEN: If so, you need this book!

BARBIE: For only \$19.95 –

KEN: *(whispers)* Plus random fees and processing.

BARBIE: All of your family woes will disappear.

KEN: Just ask Miranda.

(HE points SL and the lights rise on MIRANDA. SHE is frozen, sitting at a kitchen table, eating dinner with MOM, DAD, and SISTER.)

BARBIE: Poor, pathetic Miranda.

KEN: Her mom is a nag.

BARBIE: Her dad is a drag.

KEN: And her sister is super hot. *(quickly)* I mean, a hag!

BARBIE: Let's see what our book can do for her.

BARBIE / KEN: Bang, bang!

(MIRANDA and her FAMILY unfreeze.)

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MIRANDA: But Moooooooooooooom! I really, really, really, really, REALLY want to go!

MOM: No.

MIRANDA: Daaaaaaaaaady! Pleeeeeeeeeeeease?!

DAD: Listen to your mother.

MIRANDA: How come Kristy got to go?

SISTER: Neener, neener, neener!

MIRANDA: Life is so unfair!

(SHE crosses her arms in a huff and THEY ALL freeze.)

BARBIE: Where does she want to go?

KEN: Where else? The bathroom.

BARBIE: Why won't they let her go?

KEN: Let's find out.

(The FAMILY unfreezes. MIRANDA rocks helplessly in her chair.)

MIRANDA: But I really have to gooooooooooooo!

MOM: Not after the last time. Now eat your dinner.

MIRANDA: I don't have any room.

DAD: And drink your milk.

MIRANDA: Are you trying to make me explode?

SISTER: Neener, neener, neener.

MIRANDA: I won't let it happen again. I promise!

MOM: That's what you said the last time. And the time before that. And the time before that.

DAD: So you're just going to have to hold it.

(THEY freeze.)

BARBIE: What did she do?! I'm on the edge of my seat!

KEN: You're not sitting.

BARBIE: Then I'm on the edge of my feet! I need to know!

KEN: Let's ask and find out.

(MIRANDA unfreezes and speaks to the audience. The FAMILY remains frozen.)

MIRANDA: I flushed, okay? I know I wasn't supposed to, but I forgot.

You see, my parents are total cheapskates. Mom spends all day cutting coupons and Dad rations our water. As a matter of fact, he rations everything. Water. Food. Hugs. So there's this picture over the toilet that says, "If it's yellow, let it mellow. If it's brown, flush it

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down." But I'm color blind! So what was I supposed to do? You tell me! (*SHE freezes.*)

KEN: And that's where our book comes in.

BARBIE: Surely this problem isn't covered.

KEN: Aux contraire. Page 32.

BARBIE: (*flips a page and reads*) "What to do when your cheapskate parents don't let you go to the bathroom." Well, I'll be.

KEN: See, Barbie. We've thought of everything.

BARBIE: I can't wait to see how this turns out.

(*The FAMILY unfreezes as MIRANDA produces a bag of cookies from her bag.*)

MIRANDA: Mom, Dad! I almost forgot. I brought home some cookies for dessert.

DAD: (*disapproving*) Cookies?

MOM: They better be a generic brand.

MIRANDA: Of course they are.

DAD / MOM: Yummmmmmmmm!

MIRANDA: (*rips open the bag*) Dig in!

(*MOM, DAD, and SISTER grab some cookies and scarf them down.*)

SISTER: Mmmmmmm, these are really good.

MIRANDA: I know! They're practically cookies.

MOM: What are they called?

MIRANDA: No, that's their name. "Practically Cookies." See.

(*SHE holds up the bag, which looks like an Oreo bag, but reads "Practically Cookies" instead.*)

DAD: Ya done good, honey.

MIRANDA: There's only one problem.

SISTER: What's that?

MIRANDA: If you turn the bag over and read the fine print, you'll see that... (*SHE reads the bag.*) "Practically Cookies may cause sudden drowsiness..."

(*MOM suddenly falls asleep and does a face plant into her food.*)

Uncontrollable twitching...

(*DAD begins to twitch uncontrollably from head to toe.*)

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And complete loss of bladder control."

(SISTER leaps out of her chair, jumping up and down.)

SISTER: I have to go the bathroom!

MIRANDA: Too bad! You had your turn!

DAD: And you're not scheduled to go again until Thursday.

SISTER: Then I'll do it right here on the floor!

MIRANDA: Me too!

DAD: Oh, all right! You can go. Just don't tell your mother!

(HE continues to twitch as SISTER jumps up and down.)

MIRANDA: Thanks, Ken and Barbie. Now I gotta go. Literally!

(SHE rushes off as the lights fade SL.)

BARBIE: Wow! That was close!

KEN: I know it. Good thing "Troubleshooting for Teens" was there to flush away her troubles.

BARBIE: *(laughs uproariously)* Hahahahaha! You're so funny, Ken!

KEN: I know it.

BARBIE: I totally just peed again.

KEN: There's more where that came from. This book is jam packed with hilarity. But that's not all, Barbie.

BARBIE: No!

KEN: Yes! You know where else teens get into trouble?

BARBIE: Where?

KEN: In love.

BARBIE: Say it isn't so!

KEN: I wish I could, but young lovers are always knee deep in trouble.

BARBIE: Have you ever been in trouble with love?

KEN: Does an Eskimo shiver?

BARBIE: Tell us about it.

KEN: I'm prohibited to by law. Moving on! Let's check in with Amber and see how "Troubleshooting for Teens" helped her get out of a dating emergency.

BARBIE / KEN: Bang, bang!

(The lights rise SR on AMBER. SHE's sitting in a movie theater with a giant bucket of popcorn in her lap.)

AMBER: I love Paul. And I'm pretty sure he loves me. But he's older than I am, so whenever we go on a date, I have to buy tickets to

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lame PG movies and then sneak into the R rated ones he wants to see. Unfortunately, this time we got caught, so now we're stuck watching "Return of the Care Bears." He left to get some Milk Duds, but that was... *(checks her watch)* ...a half an hour ago. I don't think he's coming back.

BARBIE: Wait.

(AMBER freezes.)

BARBIE: If she's on a date, how can she possibly take the book with her? It's ginormous!

KEN: I'm so glad you asked. And I have just the answer. The first thousand people who order "Troubleshooting for Teens" will also receive our mini-manual.

(BARBIE pulls an itsy-bitsy doll sized book from her pocket.)

BARBIE: You mean this mini-manual?

KEN: That's right.

BARBIE / KEN: For the troublemaker on the go!

BARBIE: Why, you've thought of everything, Ken!

KEN: Indeed I have. That's because I'm a man.

BARBIE: You're absolutely right.

KEN: Also because I'm a man.

BARBIE: Carry on!

(AMBER unfreezes.)

AMBER: This is the worst date ever. And the movie is even worse. The Care Bears don't kill or sleep with anyone.

(Just then, PAUL enters SR, along with STACEY.)

PAUL: Hey, Amber. Look who I bumped into in the lobby.

STACEY: *(snotty)* Hi, Amber.

AMBER: *(fake nice)* Hi, Stacey.

(STACEY sits to the left of AMBER and PAUL sits to her right. AMBER whispers angrily to PAUL.)

AMBER: What is she doing here?!

PAUL: She asked if she could sit with us. I didn't want to be rude.

AMBER: Rude?! Rude is inviting your ex-girlfriend to join us on our date!

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(THEY freeze.)

BARBIE: *(as an ominous sound effect)* Dum, dum, dum!

KEN: Dum, dum, dum is right.

BARBIE: That's what I call double trouble.

KEN: "Double Trouble." That could be the title of our next book. Good one, Barbie!

BARBIE: No worries. I come up with all the ideas so that you can take credit for them.

KEN: Let's see how Amber uses our mini-manual to get out of this passionate pickle.

(AMBER unfreezes and consults her mini-manual. SHE laughs as SHE drops the manual in her popcorn, then leans toward STACEY.)

AMBER: Hey, Stacey.

STACEY: What do you want, freak?

AMBER: *(holds out the bucket)* I want to offer you some popcorn.

STACEY: Thanks, but no thanks. I like to watch what I eat. *(SHE looks AMBER up and down.)* Unlike some people.

AMBER: Come on. Paul likes a girl with meat on her bones.

STACEY: For real?

AMBER: He likes big butts and he cannot lie.

STACEY: Okay, then. But just one bite.

(SHE reaches into the bucket and grabs a handful of popcorn. SHE chows down as PAUL pulls AMBER in his direction.)

PAUL: I'm so happy that you're being nice to Stacey.

AMBER: Why wouldn't I be nice?

(All of a sudden, STACEY clutches her throat and starts to choke. SHE waves her arms around madly, trying desperately to get their attention throughout the following.)

PAUL: *(looks at the movie screen)* You know, this movie isn't so bad.

AMBER: You're right. There's something about those bears that really make you care.

PAUL: *(puts his arm around her)* Maybe that's why they're called Care Bears.

AMBER: *(puts her head on his shoulder)* You know, I never thought of that. You're so smart.

PAUL: And you know what else?

AMBER: What's that?

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PAUL: I care about you.

AMBER: And I care about you.

(After an epic struggle, STACEY collapses to the floor, dead. AMBER gives KEN the thumbs-up as the lights fade SR.)

BARBIE: You mean she murdered the ex-girlfriend?

KEN: Now, now. Let's not get carried away. You can't exactly call it murder if it's an "accident."

BARBIE: An accident?

KEN: That's right. Not only is the mini-manual a wealth of problem solving information, but it also makes a terrific choking hazard!

(BARBIE tilts her head and, for the very first time, gives him a concerned look.)

BARBIE: Are you sure about this?

KEN: *(laughs)* Do paint fumes make you happy?

BARBIE: You're kinda freaking me out a little.

KEN: Freaking you out, blowing your mind. Same thing. Bang, bang!

BARBIE: Yeah. *(half-heartedly)* Bang, bang.

KEN: I think now would be a good time to tell the folks out there all about our brand new companion books in the "Troubleshooting" series.

BARBIE: You mean it's a series?

KEN: But of course! Teenagers aren't the only ones that get into trouble. Take a look at this success story from our latest volume, "Troubleshooting for Parents!"

(HE points SL and the lights rise on PARENT, sitting in the front seat of a car. SHE drives, with two screaming TODDLERS crammed in the back seat.)

TODDLER 1: Mommy!

TODDLER 2: Mommy!

TODDLERS: Are we there yet?!

PARENT: That's it!

(PARENT abruptly slams on the brakes. The tires squeal and the TODDLERS fly forward, banging their heads on the seat backs in front of them. THEY both go limp. PARENT takes a deep, cleansing breath.)

PARENT: Ahhh! Peace at last!

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(The lights fade SL.)

KEN: And in case you think we've neglected our elders, you'll be thrilled to know that we just added a third volume to our ever-expanding collection.

BARBIE: What's that, Ken?

KEN: "Troubleshooting for Seniors."

(The lights rise SR on GRANDMA. SHE's flat on her back, banging a cane on the floor.)

GRANDMA: Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!

(Suddenly, a SNAKE CHARMER enters, wearing a turban and playing a flute. As HE plays, GRANDMA rises like a cobra from a basket. The lights fade SR.)

BARBIE: *(perplexed)* Um... wow.

KEN: Wow is right. The rest of the world may have forgotten about seniors, but I haven't. So order now!

BARBIE: And if you order within the next twenty minutes, you'll receive both additional volumes for free.

KEN: *(whispers)* Plus gouging fees and... *(aloud)* ...oh, who am I kidding? We're going to charge you up the wazoo!

BARBIE: Consider them our gift to you just for ordering.

KEN: Now, Barbie, I know what you must be thinking.

BARBIE: What's that, Ken?

KEN: What do you do when you're being pursued by the cops?

BARBIE: Golly. That's not at all what I was thinking.

KEN: Have I got the answer for you! No guide would be complete without a chapter entitled, "Trouble With the Law."

BARBIE: Have you ever been in trouble with the law?

KEN: Don't ask me. Ask my ankle bracelet!

(KEN smiles as HE lifts his pant leg. There's an electronic monitor strapped around his ankle.)

BARBIE: Goodness me! What did you do?

KEN: Pleaded the fifth. No one will ever know! Hahahahahaha!

BARBIE: Surely you're not telling teenagers to do anything illegal.

KEN: Maybe, maybe not. Let's find out! Bang, bang!

(The lights rise SL on THUG and DELINQUENT, frozen in the middle of spray painting an imaginary brick wall. THEY also have ski masks on.)

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BARBIE: Uh oh.

KEN: You said it!

BARBIE: It looks like those teenage thugs are up to no good. No good at all.

(THUG and DELINQUENT unfreeze and shake their cans of spray paint.)

THUG: Hurry up and paint! Before we get caught!

DELINQUENT: Chill, man. There are no cops around.

(THEY spray paint on the imaginary wall for a moment. Suddenly, THEY get hit with beams of light from two flashlights.)

COP 1: *(offstage)* Freeze right there!

COP 2: *(offstage)* And put your hands where we can see them!

(COP 1 and COP 2 enter SL, keeping their flashlights trained on THUG and DELINQUENT.)

COP 1: Well, well, well.

COP 2: What do we have here?

THUG: We're not doing anything.

COP 1: Oh no?

COP 2: It looks to me like you were spray painting obscenities on that brick wall there.

THUG: Okay, okay. You caught us, officer. But we weren't writing anything obscene. I swear. Just a couple of letters.

COP 1: I wasn't born yesterday, you know. I know exactly what word you were going to write.

THUG: Oh yeah? Lots of words start with those two letters.

COP 2: Like what?

THUG: Like fun.

DELINQUENT: And fuse.

THUG: And furniture.

DELINQUENT: Or like in that Christmas song.

COP 1: What Christmas song?

DELINQUENT: You know. *(sings)* "Deck the halls with boughs of holly.

FU, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la."

COP 1: That's "FA, la, la, la, la, la, la, la, la." F-A.

DELINQUENT: Fine, then. F-A. As in fantastic.

BARBIE: Hold the phone!

(THUG, DELINQUENT, and COPS freeze.)

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KEN: Yes, Barbie?

BARBIE: Maybe I'm wrong, but it seems to me that the best way to get out of trouble is to just not get caught.

KEN: Bite your tongue!

BARBIE: (*bites her tongue, then screams*) Ow!

KEN: What's wrong?

BARBIE: You told me to bite my tongue. And it hurt.

KEN: (*whispers*) If you tell the audience not to get caught, then they won't have any reason to buy our book. Understand?

BARBIE: Whoops. My bad.

KEN: Don't let it happen again.

BARBIE: I'll keep my big mouth shut because I know my rightful place in the world.

KEN: (*pats her on the head*) Good girl. Now I bet you're wondering how these delinquents are going to get out of this one.

(*BARBIE nods yes.*)

Well, you know what I always say...

(*BARBIE shakes her head "no."*)

If you're going to go out, go out with a bang!

(*BARBIE goes "bang, bang" with her two hands and the others unfreeze.*)

THUG: You heard the man. Let's get 'em!

THUG / DELINQUENT: Ahhhhhhhhhhhhh!

(*THEY holler bloody murder as THEY ambush the COPS and jump onto their backs.*)

COP 1: Oh no!

COP 2: They're going to kill us!

(*THUG and DELINQUENT tackle the COPS to the floor and start punching them. KEN really gets into it.*)

KEN: That's right! Get 'em! Show those cops who's boss!

COP 1: Yo, wait! Hold it a second! Time out!

COP 2: What are you doing?

COP 1: How do I get them to stop beating up on us?

COP 2: Why?

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COP 1: Just tell me!

COP 2: Use the safe word.

COP 1: Continue! Continue! Continue!

(THUG and DELINQUENT instantly go silent and stop hitting the COPS. As a matter of fact, THEY drop their characters all together.)

KEN: Hey! What are you doing? I was enjoying that.

COP 1: I said the safe word.

KEN: What safe word?

COP 2: "Continue."

THUG / DELINQUENT: So we stopped.

KEN: I thought I told you never to stop in the middle of a dramatization.

COP 1: *(shines his flashlight on KEN)* Is that who I think it is?

COP 2: *(does the same)* Who?

COP 1: I thought he looked familiar, but I couldn't quite put my finger on it. But when I heard him yelling, he sounded just like the guy on the news...

COP 2: *(realizes)* You know what? I think you're right!

THUG: What are you talking about?

DELINQUENT: Yeah. Who is he?

(The COPS stand up, knocking THUG and DELINQUENT to the floor.)

COP 1: Go on, kids. Take a hike.

COP 2: And take some acting lessons while you're at it.

(THUG and DELINQUENT angrily take off their ski masks.)

THUG: You heard the fuzz. Let's go.

DELINQUENT: Fuzz! There's another word that starts with –

THUG: You can drop the act, Bozo.

(THEY exit as the lights fade SL. The COPS circle KEN, investigating.)

COP 1: If you picture him with a moustache –

COP 2: And wearing a sweater vest –

COP 1 / COP 2: It really could be him.

KEN: What are you doing?

COP 1: Your name wouldn't happen to me Max, now would it?

KEN: *(quickly)* No! Why? What have you heard?

COP 2: Yes you are. You're Maxamillian Rinkending.

KEN: Who?

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COP 2: International con-artist, extortionist, embezzler, scoundrel, hypnotist, thief, and liar.

COP 1: Guilty of dozens of crimes against humanity.

COP 2: Or to put it another way: an infomercial host.

KEN: Am not.

COP 2: Are too. You were last charged with selling a faulty hair-growth system to hapless bald people.

KEN: Hey, that system worked. So what if I neglected to mention where the hair was going to grow?

COP 2: So you admit it.

KEN: No! I've never heard of this Dingenrink person.

COP 1: That's Rinkending.

BARBIE: What are they talking about, Ken?

KEN: Nothing. Now get my dinner, woman. And make it snappy!

BARBIE: Yes, Ken! Whatever you say!

(SHE happily skips offstage, but COP 1 snags her by the arm and pulls her back.)

COP 1: You're not going anywhere, sweetheart.

COP 2: We're going to need an official statement from you.

BARBIE: A statement?

COP 1: That's right, sugar pie. Whether you know it or not, your partner here is a fugitive of justice.

BARBIE: He is?

COP 2: He is.

BARBIE: I had no idea.

COP 1: Let's arrest the louse and haul him to the clink.

KEN: You don't have any proof.

COP 1: Do you have a scar on your left butt cheek?

KEN: No.

COP 2: Neither does Max Rinkending.

COP 1 / COP 2: Busted!

COP 1: Cuff him.

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