Excerpt from Act I of *Stage Fright:*

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*(BERNICE comes onstage and shakes hands with SAL and PRINCIPAL JOHNSON. She wears a necklace of safety pins.)*

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON

It’s a pleasure to meet you. Your necklace of safety pins makes me think you’ll be helping with costumes

BERNICE

Yes indeed. I never go anywhere without my safety pins. *(Lifts necklace to show it.)* But, more importantly, I’m here to handle the drama.

SAL

The drama? *(puzzled)* But I thought Jules was the director?

BERNICE

Oh, I’m not talking about the onstage drama. I handle the real drama. You know ― the backstage drama. The kind you of drama get when you combine dozens of students and all their issues in a small, confined, mostly airless space … Catch my drift?

SAL

Ah, I do indeed. Well, let me know if you need any backup. I got my Ph.D in clinical adolescent psychology.

JULES

Of course you did.

*(JORDAN enters wearing boxing gloves and stands like a superhero, with hands on hips.)*

JORDAN

Did someone say backup?! I’m Jordan the newly hired teacher. I’ve got acting experience and I’m here to help with the play! I can engage these kids and help keep the rowdy ones in line!

*(Throws punches into air.)*

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON

Uhhm, Jordan? You do know that corporal punishment was banned in public schools years ago?

TONY THE GHOST

That was a big mistake! That’s why all these young punks are so mouthy these days! Bring back the paddle, I say!

JORDAN

Corporal punishment? What? … Oh, you mean the boxing gloves! Don’t worry, I wouldn’t use these on the kids. *(Takes them off and throws them to the side.)* I was just practicing for my audition tomorrow. They’re casting Rocky 17!

*(PRINCIPAL JOHNSON does wipe-the-sweat-from-forehead gesture.)*

SAL

Okay, well I guess the next step will be to pick a suitable play that will have parts for lots and lots of kids. *(Pulls out stack of scripts from a box.)* I’ve taken the liberty of rounding up several dozen classic scripts. Now we just need to pick the best one!

BERNICE, JULES, SAL, and JORDAN

*(They all look at each other.)* How hard can that be?

PRINCIPAL JOHNSON

You all carry on. I’d better get back to the office. It looks like I’ve got to deal with five upset students, four desperate parents, three put-out teachers, two peeved staffers, and one mad custodian in a tizzy.

*(PRINCIPAL JOHNSON walks across the stage, back to office. We see a group of people milling about near her desk.)*

GREEK CHORUS

*(Singing to the tune of “Partridge in a Pear Tree”)* Five upset students …

OFFICE STUDENT 1

Principal Johnson! I need to go home! I forgot to feed my beta fish Bubbles this morning!

OFFICE STUDENT 2

Someone squished a pudding cup into my locker!

OFFICE STUDENT 3

My frenemy just put extreme close-up photos of my nostrils on Snapchat!

OFFICE STUDENT 4

My parents say I’m not allowed to play that rock-and-roll devil’s music in band!

OFFICE STUDENT 5

I think my science project accidentally created a fast-growing and deadly virus!

GREEK CHORUS

*(Singing)* Four desperate parents …

OFFICE PARENT 1

I need to get my daughter out of class right now! She has a very important appointment!

SCHOOL SECRETARY SLOAT

Oh my! At the doctor?

OFFICE PARENT 1

No! At the salon! She needs a mani-pedi right away ― it’s been a few weeks since she’s had her nails done!

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CHARACTERS

• Greek chorus – Makes humorous comments and observations throughout the play. The size of the chorus should be determined according to casting needs.

• Jules Jenkins – new director of the AVHS drama program (female or male)

• Kennedy Johnson – principal of AVHS (female or male)

• Morgan Grundy – vice principal of AVHS, concerned with vices (female or male)

• Billy Sloat – school secretary (female or male)

• Ghost of Tony Vecchioni – a tough guy spirit

• Avery – outgoing theater director, slightly bitter and sarcastic (female or male)

• Sal – volunteer parent producer of the play, very Type A, efficient, and over-achieving (female or male)

• Bernice – grandmother and therapist to all who handles costumes and backstage drama

• Jordan – cool young teacher who helps with the play (female or male)

• Custodian – tired of the darn mess (female or male)

• Alex – play-judging panel member, strives to be the stereotypical director (female or male)

• Geraldine – play-judging panel member, flamboyantly dramatic

• Frankie – play-judging panel member, very intense and into gritty method acting (female or male)

• Patsy – play-judging panel member, very positive and nurturing, preschool-teacher type

• Shakespearean Playwright

• Shakespearean Actors

• Spa Day Playwright

• Spa Day Play Actors

• Football Playwright

• Football Play Actors

• Mime Playwright

• Mime Play Actors

• Millard Playwright

• Millard Play Actors

• Students

• Teachers, including Señor/a Picante

• Staffers

• Meeting Parents

• Conflict Cast Members and their (non-speaking role) co-horts Skyler, Taylor, and Cameron

• Ticket Sales Parents

• Antisocial Parents

• Refreshment Sales Parents

• Audience Members, including Targeted Audience Member

• Candy Kid and Candy Parent

• Program Giver

• Johnny’s Parents

• Stage Manager

• Sheep

• Farmer Brown

• Townspeople

• Singing Trees

• Godot Actors