

READERS THEATRE SCRIPTS

For the 2004-2005

YOUNG ADULT SEQUOYAH BOOK AWARD

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These readers theatre scripts were developed as class projects in Kathy Latrobe's (Norman Campus) and Linda Gann's (Tulsa Campus) Books and Materials for Young Adults classes (LIS 5373, Summer 2004) at the University of Oklahoma School of Library and Information Studies.

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BEFORE WE WERE FREE

By Julia Alvarez

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern, and the other readers sit on tall stools.

X
Chucha

X
Mami

X
Anita

X
Lucinda

X
Narrator

Narrator: We are sharing a scene from Julia Alvarez's novel, *Before We Were Free*, historical fiction set during the Dominican Revolution of 1960-61. Under the rule of the dictator Rafael Trujillo, life in the Dominican Republic is fraught with assassinations, disappearances, imprisonments, spies, and sudden flights. The dangerous and volatile times are especially trying for 12-year-old Anita and her family who are associated with the resistance. Anita, read by _____, came home from school early yesterday with her cousin who was quickly put on an expected flight to New York with her family. Today, armed men arrive at the family compound in half a dozen black cars, and they are now searching the buildings within the compound. Anita is terrified, and she seeks answers from Chucha, the maid, read by _____; from Mami, her mother, read by _____; and from Lucinda, her older sister, read by _____. I am _____, the narrator. As our scene opens, Anita is trailing behind Mami.

Anita: Mami, who are they? Who are they?

Mami: (terrified; hisses her reply) Not now! I will be back in a few minutes.

Anita: Chucha, who are these strange men?

Chucha: (stage whisper) SIM. (makes a creepy gesture of cutting off her head with her index finger).

Anita: (panicked) But, *who* are SIM?

Chucha: Secret Police. They go around investigating everyone and then disappearing them.

Anita: *Secret police?*

Chucha: (again, gives a long, slow guillotine nod that cuts off any further questions)

Narrator: Chucha goes on about her work in another room, and Lucinda enters.

Lucinda: Anita, what is going on?

Anita: Chucha said they're secret police. They were asking for our cousins, but Mami acted like she didn't know they left for New York.

Lucinda: The SIM know perfectly well where the Garcias are. They just want an excuse to traipse through here. And, of course, they'd love to get their hands on Papi.

Anita: But why?

Lucinda: Don't you know anything, Anita? (more gently) Anita, you've got to do something with those bangs.

Narrator: Mami returns.

Anita: Mami, are they really policemen? Are they really? It doesn't make any sense. Shouldn't we trust them instead of being afraid?

Mami: Shhh! Shhh!

Anita: Didn't Papi say we should carry on with normal life?

Mami: (in a stage whisper) Anita, *por favor*, please, please you must stop asking questions.

Anita: But why?

Mami: Because I don't have any answers. I will be back after I speak to Chucha.

Anita: Lucinda, pretty please, tell me what is going on.

Lucinda: (in a stage whisper) (looking briefly over her shoulder) We should be okay here.

Anita: Why are you whispering?

Lucinda: The SIM have probably hidden microphones in the house and are monitoring our conversations from their cars.

Anita: Why are they treating us like criminals? We haven't done anything wrong.

Lucinda: (stage whisper) Shhh! It is all about Uncle Toni. (glances over her shoulder again) A few months ago, he and his friends were involved in a plot to get rid of our dictator.

Anita: Now I'm *really* confused. I thought we liked El Jefe. His picture hangs in our front entryway with the saying below it: *In this house, Trujillo rules*. And, the teacher hangs his picture in our classroom next to George Washington.

Lucinda: We have to do that. Everyone has to. He's a dictator. Anyway, as for Uncle Toni, the SIM discovered the plot and most of our uncle's friends were arrested. And, nobody knows where Uncle Toni is. He might be hiding out or they—(looks again over her shoulder) they might have him in custody.

Anita: Will they disappear him?

Lucinda: (surprised by Anita's question) Let's hope not. Uncle Toni is a favorite of the family.

Anita: Yes, he is very handsome, and all your girlfriends have crushes on him.

Lucinda: Ever since the SIM uncovered that plot, the regime has been after the family. That's why everyone's left.

Anita: Why don't we leave, too; we're not going to school anyway?

Lucinda: And abandon Uncle Toni? (shakes her head vigorously) What if he comes back? (no longer in a stage whisper) What if he needs our help?

Anita: Shhh!

Narrator: In a matter of days, Anita's world turns upside down; and, while she and her family live with unspeakable horror, Anita learns the cost of freedom. *Before We Were Free* by Julia Alvarez.

ASHES OF ROSES

By Mary Jane Auch

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; other readers sit on tall stools.

X
Rose
X X
Maureen Ma

X
Narrator

Narrator: This reader's theater adaptation is based on a scene from *Ashes Of Roses* by Mary Jane Auch. No longer able to deal with the hardships in America, Ma, Rose, Maureen, and their youngest sister, Bridget, are boarding a ship for the return trip to Ireland. In this presentation, _____ is Rose; _____ is Ma; _____ is Maureen; and I, _____, am the narrator. The setting is the New York harbor in 1911, and several huge ocean liners line the docks waiting for passengers to board. The taxi driver begins unloading their goods. Rose knows it was now or never.

Rose: (taking a deep breath and blurting out) Ma, please, let's stay. Let's take up Uncle Patrick on his offer for a nice little place of our own.

Ma: Nonsense, Rose, We're not stayin' in this terrible place, and that's the end of it.

Rose: Then let me stay. You take the girls and go back, but let me have the money from my ticket. I'll make my own way until you and Da come back.

Ma: Don't be ridiculous, Ye're a child. Surely ye don't think I'll let ye stay here by yerself.

Rose: I'm not a child, Ma. Back home, some of my friends are married women with children.

Ma: With husbands to take care of them, I'll remind ye. Not wanderin' around in strange city by themselves.

Rose: I won't be alone. I'll find a job and a place to stay. I'll go back to the rose-making shop, or I'll find another job where I can use my sewing skills.

Ma: You heard what Elsa said about the sweatshops. That's no place for a decent girl to work.

Maureen: (jumping in) Oh, Ma, Elsa doesn't know what she talkin' about. Rose can take care of herself.

Narrator: As more wagons and carriages pull up, Ma begins to pick up their belongings to load onto the ship.

Ma: You and Maureen take the trunk. I need to hold Bridget, Lord knows there's enough places a child can get lost here.

Rose: (pleading) Ma. Please let me stay. The money for second-class ticket will give me a good start. I can get a nice place to stay while I look for a job.

Ma: (angrily) I'll not argue with ye. If yer father were here, ye wouldn't be standing up to him like this.

Rose: Yes, I would, Ma. This means a lot to me, and I'm not arguin', either. I'm stayin'. And that's final. If ye won't give me back my ticket, then I'll manage anyway. I'll live on the streets if I have to until I get a job. Now I'll help ye get our goods onto the boat, but then I'm getting' off.

Ma: Look what this place has done to ye already. I don't even know ye anymore. My own daughter has turned against me.

Narrator: Tears began to fill her eyes, but Rose stands firm. She holds out her hand.

Rose: (firmly) Give me the ticket, Ma.

Ma: (quiet resolve) I don't have the strength to wrestle ye onto the boat, Rose. Open the suitcase and take out yer things. Here is your ticket.

Maureen: If Rose stays, then I'm staying, too. I'll be company for Rose. And I can work too. I'll earn my own way.

Ma: Don't be foolish, Maureen. A child yer age needs to go to school.

Maureen: Then I'll work after school.

Ma: (throwing up a hand; glancing at the sky while shouting) Ye see what ye've done to me America? Ye've taken my two sweet daughters an turned them into headstrong fools. What will ye do to me next? I don't know

what's right or wrong anymore, but ye're both so stubborn. I'm washin' my hands of the both of ye.

Narrator: Ma smiles and hugs each of her daughters. Her face is sad as she boards the ship with little Bridget resting on her hip. Waving their goodbyes, they all wonder when or if they will see one another again. To find out what adventures await Rose and Maureen in New York read *Ashes of Roses* by Mary Jane Auch.

STAND TALL
By Joan Bauer

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; Tree stands by Mrs. Pierce who sits in a chair.

X X
Tree Mrs. Pierce

X
Narrator

Narrator: I am _____, the narrator for our readers theatre presentation that introduces Tree, the main character in Joan Bauer’s humorous and wise novel, *Stand Tall*. Tree, read by _____, is twelve years old and stands tall—six feet, three and a half inches tall. And, he finds life tough: Coach Glummer expects him to excel at basketball; his Vietnam vet grandfather is not feeling good; his parents have divorced; and he worries about his elderly dog. As our scene opens, the school’s administrative assistant, Mrs. Pierce, read by _____, demands:

Mrs. Pierce: (briskly) And *where* is home this week? Your parents didn’t fill out the multiple-residence sheet that we sent to them in the fall. We need to know where you are, and when, for emergencies.

Tree: Here is the month’s schedule that Mom made. She has color-coordinated each week –yellow when I will be living with her, blue when I will be living with Dad. Mom is organized.

Mrs. Pierce: Will this be changing monthly?

Tree: (shifting from one foot to another) Yes.

Mrs. Pierce: (too loud for Tree’s privacy) You’ll be getting a new schedule monthly?

Tree: (nods “yes” and tries to motion with one hand for her to lower the sound level)

Mrs. Pierce: You’ll need to bring that by the office on the first of the month. *And*, we need to know who is the custodial parent—your mother or your father.

Tree: (quietly, but audible to the audience) They're doing it together even though they're divorced.

Mrs. Pierce: If your parents are co-custodians, then that's a different form. Take this one. Is there one parent who should be contacted with all school issues?

Tree: (sighs) They kind of take turns.

Mrs. Pierce: Well, you'll need this form if *both* parents want to be contacted on any issue—the duplication makes it a little more difficult for us. If they *both* want to receive your report cards, we need to know that, too.

Tree: Is there a form for having no one receive the report cards?

Mrs. Pierce: Of course not. (looking up at Tree) Is there anything else?

Tree: (nods "no")

Mrs. Pierce: Oh, yes. *Who* will be receiving the invoice for school trips?

Tree: I don't know.

Mrs. Pierce: That can be put on this form—form C—which you can attach to form D, which covers any emergency medical care you might require when you are off school property but participating in school activities, like athletics. And, if *both* your parents want to receive an audiocassette of the principal's nondenominational holiday address, they need to put an X in that box. I think that's it. The newsletter comes out quarterly and can also be mailed to grandparents and other interested parties.

Tree: My grandpa lives with my dad.

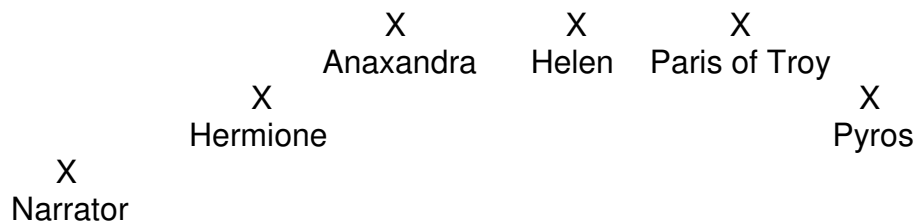
Mrs. Pierce: That saves us on postage. I'll need those back by Friday.

Narrator: There it was in black and white—just how complicated his life had become. However, his grandpa always speaks the truth and offers good advice, and he has met a friend, Sophie, the outspoken new girl at school. With good humor, she makes certain Tree has mottoes to live by: Loss makes you reach for gain. Death helps you celebrate life. War helps you work for peace. A flood makes you glad you're standing tall. And a **tall** boy can stop the wind so a candle of hope can burn bright. Read Joan Bauer's funny and inspiring story, *Stand Tall*.

GODDESS OF YESTERDAY

By Caroline B. Cooney

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern, and other readers sit on tall stools.



Narrator: Our readers theatre presentation is from Caroline B. Cooney's *Goddess Of Yesterday*, a novel adapted from the *Iliad* by Homer (800 B.C.E). In this scene Helen of Sparta and Paris of Troy have fallen in love, and Helen's husband, King Menelaus, has gone away to attend his grandfather's funeral. Helen, read by _____, is secretly waiting for Paris, read by _____. Other characters include Hermione, Helen's daughter, read by _____; Hermione's friend, Anaxandra, a captive read by _____; and Pyros, a soldier loyal to King Menelaus, read by _____. I am _____, the narrator.

As the scene opens, Anaxandra is standing in the battlements gazing out across the kingdom when she notices the flickering lights of many torches coming toward the city gate, which is unguarded and open. She runs to warn the queen, Helen.

Anaxandra: (panicked and alarmed) O, Queen! They have broken their guest-friendship! The Trojans have come armed with Aeneas as their general. You must protect yourself. Paris is your enemy, not your friend. In your husband's stead, you must call out your soldiers. I have seen what pirates can do. You must---

Helen: (calmly, haughtily) Paris is not my enemy.

Anaxandra: (pleadingly) He is, O queen. I know you do not trust me. I beg you to trust me now. For the sake of your children. For your own dear sake. The Trojans have come for Amyklai.

Helen: (conceitedly) No, the Trojans have come for me!

Narrator: Helen goes through the palace unlocking the doors where the kingdom's treasure is held, allowing Paris and his men to steal it.

Hermione: (angrily) Mother, how dare you! The Trojans will take you as a slave. Just the way Castor and Pollux so long ago took Aethra. The way Telamon of old took Hesione. The way Callisto's mother, Petra, was taken.

Paris: (smugly) My men have commandeered every cart and donkey! Aeneas, meanwhile, is removing the temple gold.

Hermione: (shocked) The temple gold! Mother! Prevent this! Apollo attacked our kingdom with plague for two years! Father has only just rescued us from disease! What will Apollo do when we let foreigners carry off his honor?

Paris: (condescendingly) We are not foreigners, little princess. We are Apollo's own children. We are taking his gold back where it belongs. Troy.

Paris: Dear Helen, we'll be in Gythion by tomorrow night and the following day we sail for Troy.

Narrator: Before Hermione can say or do anything else, Anaxandra drags her away into the shadows.

Hermione: (indignantly) The gold veil on her hair? It was a wedding gift. My mother is wearing her wedding veil to loot her own palace. (forcefully) I will kill her!

Anaxandra: (understandingly) No, Hermione. I cannot let you commit that crime. Come, return to the women's wing. Something will set these men off, ours or theirs, and fighting will begin. We must be sure your baby brother is safe.

Narrator: Instigated by the Menelaus' soldier, Pyros, fighting does break out between the Trojans and the Spartans. Pyros is stabbed in the belly with a spear and lies on the ground, dying.

Pyros: (angrily, with last breath) Helen of Sparta! I curse you! You ordered the gates to be left open! You are a traitor to the king, your husband! May the gods not forgive you!

Narrator: Paris, with Helen at his side, finishes killing Pyros and thrusts his spear into the sky in victory.

Paris: (triumphantly) There is no Helen of Sparta! There is Helen of Troy, and she is mine!

Narrator: What happens to Helen of Troy after this night of treason and death?
Read Caroline Cooney's *Goddess of Yesterday*.

Narrator: Matt realizes he needs something to interest them. He holds up his finger, as Celia does when she wants him to wait. He nods his head to show that he agrees with Maria's demand and is about to do something.

Emilia: What does that mean?

Steven: Beats me. Maybe he's mute and can't talk.

Narrator: Matt races to his bedroom and rips his picture of the man with a bullfrog sandwich off his wall. It makes Celia laugh, maybe it will do the same for these children. He runs back and presses the picture against the window. The three children approach.

Maria: What's it say?

Steven: (reading the picture) Ribbit on Rye. Do you get it? It's a bullfrog going ribbit, ribbit, ribbit, and it's between two slices of rye bread. That's pretty funny.

Emilia: (giggling)

Maria: (uncertainly) People don't eat bullfrogs. I mean, not when they're alive.

Emilia: It's a joke, dum-dum.

Maria: (getting angry) I'm not a dum-dum! It's mean and nasty to eat bullfrogs! I don't think it's funny at all.

Emilia: Oh, lighten up, Maria.

Maria: You brought me out here to see a boy, and it was miles and miles across the fields, and I'm tired and the boy won't talk. I hate you!

Narrator: This isn't what Matt had wanted at all. Maria is crying; Emilia looks angry; and Steven had turned his back on both of them. Matt raps on the window. When Maria looks up, he wads up the picture and throws it across the room with all his force.

Maria: (trying to stop crying) See, he agrees with me.

Steven: This is getting weirder by the minute. I knew we shouldn't have brought her.

Emilia: I thought the boy would talk to a kid his own size. Come on, Maria. We have to get back before dark.

Maria: (firmly) I'm not walking anywhere. I'm staying right here.

Emilia: Well, I won't carry you, fatso.

Steven: Just leave her.

Narrator: Steven and Emilia begin to walk off, leaving Maria sitting right on the ground. Matt is appalled. It will be dark soon, and if the big kids leave, then Maria will be all alone. Matt suddenly knows what he must do. He grabs the big iron cooking pot Celia uses to make menudo and smashes the glass in the window. It falls in a tinkling, jangling mass on the ground.

Steven: (surprised) Holy frijoles!

Matt: My name is Matt. I live here. Do you want to play?

Emilia: (with amazement) He can talk!

Steven: Is that how you usually open a window, kid? Stay back, Maria. There's glass all over. This is creepy! The window's nailed shut. What are you, some kind of prisoner?

Matt: I live here.

Steven: You told us that already.

Matt: Do you want to play?

Emilia: Maybe he's like a parrot and only knows a few words.

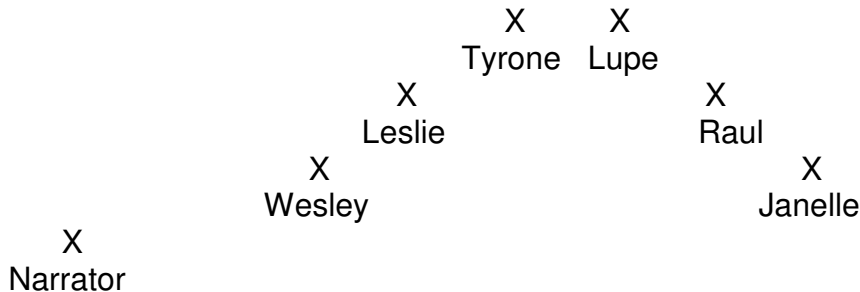
Maria: I want to play.

Narrator: Matt decides he must act quickly. He climbs up to the window and jumps out—only to land with bare feet on the shattered glass. Before Emilia and Steven can help, Matt passes out. Who is this mysterious child locked up and hidden away in a poppy field? Discover his destiny in *The House of the Scorpion*.

BRONX MASQUERADE

By Nikki Grimes

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; the other six readers sit on tall stools.



Narrator: I am _____, the narrator for our readers theatre presentation from *Bronx Masquerade* by Nikki Grimes. This award-winning novel takes readers inside Mr. Ward’s high school English class where there is open-mike poetry on Fridays. Participating in the open mike are the 18 voices of the novel. All of the students face obstacles. Some have problems with self-confidence; some have no one to believe in them; and others simply don’t want to be alone. Among them is an African American who is tired of school. His name is Wesley, read by _____.

Wesley: (conversationally) I ain’t particular about doing homework, you understand. I probably got the longest list of excuses for missing homework of anyone alive. But lately, I haven’t had to make excuses for not having my homework done, because I’ve been doing it. We spent a month reading poetry from the Harlem Renaissance in our English class. Mr. Ward asked us to write an essay about it. I wrote a bunch of poems instead. How was I to know Teach would ask me to read it out loud? But I did it, I read my poem. By the time I got back to my seat, other kids were asking to read their poems.

Narrator: Another student who shares his thoughts and feelings is Tyrone, read by _____. It is Tyrone who is perhaps touched the most by what takes place in Mr. Ward’s classroom.

Tyrone: School ain’t nothin’ but a joke. These white folks talking ‘bout some future—like I got one! I’m just about ready to sleep off the whole year

when this teacher starts talking about poetry. And he rattles off a poem by some white guy named Dylan Thomas that sounds an awful lot like rap. Now, I know me some rap, and I start thinking I should show Mr. Ward what rap is really all about. So I tell him I've got a poem I'd like to read. He tells me to bring it on Friday because he has planned time for poetry readings. He says we'll call them Open Mike Fridays. Next thing I know, I'm digging my old rap poems out of my dresser drawer and bringing them to school.

Narrator: Another student is Raul, a gifted artist, read by _____.

Raul: Only twenty minutes 'til class starts, and Mr. Ward don't like it if I leave a mess on his desk, so that's eighteen minutes to paint, plus two more for cleaning up and washing paintbrushes. I'm lucky Mr. Ward leaves brushes and watercolor paper for me to use, though I ain't gonna tell him that. It's none of his business I can't afford fancy brushes and watercolor paper at home. My brothers laugh at me just 'cause they've been in the world a little longer. They say I'm *loco en la cabeza*, that ain't no Hispanic gonna be no big-time artist in America. I tell them, watch me.

Narrator: Lupe is a teen-age girl looking for someone to love. Reading her part is _____.

Lupe: Sometimes I say my rosaries and beg for someone to love. I lay in bed under the crucifix and pray 'til my fingers go numb on the beads. I think I should do like my friend Gloria Martinez. I should make a baby of my own. Maybe that's the answer. I like Marco enough. I don't want to marry him, but he's cute. We'd make pretty babies together, I think.

Narrator: Janelle is a girl who is struggling with her appearance. Reading her thoughts is _____.

Janelle: I can't believe I'm getting up in front of people and talking about personal stuff, and liking it. I'm saying things that I would never tell anybody, usually. But, I don't know. There's something about reading poetry. It's almost like acting. The room is set up like a stage, anyway. Mr. Ward turns most of the lights out, and we stand in a spot in front of the

video camera. Once he switches it on, it's like you become somebody else, and you can say anything, as long as it's in a poem. Then, when you're finished, you just disappear into the dark and sit down, and you're back to being your own self.

Narrator: One of the few white students is Leslie, read by _____.

Leslie: I miss my friends. That's mostly why I hated moving here. I knew I wouldn't have anybody to talk to when it hurts, and it hurts all the time. Missing Mom, I mean. I was full up with loneliness for her a few weeks ago. It was one of those moments that come from outta nowhere, when you all of a sudden feel something reach inside your chest, grab your hearts, and squeeze 'til you can hardly breathe. Last month, Mr. Ward gave our class an assignment to write a poem about what frightens us most. A year ago, I might have written about something silly, like ghosts, which I don't even believe in, and even if I did, ghosts would not be at the top of my list. The scariest thing I can think of now is being all alone in the world.

Lupe: I broke up with Marco. I been planning to break up with him for weeks. I mean, I hardly ever see him anyways. Still, I wasn't in no hurry to make it official: Lupe Algarin is alone. I can' hardly breathe thinking about it.

Tyrone: I want to be stone. I've felt that way a couple of times. Once, when the undertaker carried my pops out of here. Another time when my girlfriend left me for my supposed-to-be homey. Both times I remember wishing I couldn't feel the hurt, wishing I could just cut my heart out and be done with it.

Janelle: Jojo asked me to marry him yesterday. When Tyrone heard me telling Lupe that, he laughed his head off. Jojo is eight years old. He's one of the kids I tutor at the public library. I was there yesterday helping him prepare for a math test when he suddenly cocked his head, looked up at me and said, "Miss Janelle, you're the most beautifulest lady on this whole planet." Then he asked me to marry him. I'm glad somebody finds me beautiful, even if he is just eight years old!

Narrator: Open-mike Fridays begin to have an impact on the students' lives. They change the way they look at the world, each other, and themselves. Wesley, Tyrone, Raul, Lupe, Janelle, Leslie, and 12 other school students learn the power of poetry and the power that they carry within themselves. Read their stories and their poetry in *Bronx Masquerade*.

HOOT
By Carl Hiaasen

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; Mullet Fingers, Roy, and Beatrice sit on tall stools arranged in a slight arc.

X
Narrator

X X X
Mullet Fingers Roy Beatrice

Narrator: I am _____, the narrator for the scene we are presenting a scene from Carl Hiaasen’s novel *HOOT*. The book is an ecology mystery set in Florida where two detectives have been hired to determine who is playing pranks and sabotaging the construction site for a new Mother Paula’s Pancake House. Gathering at the site are three teenagers: quirky Mullet Fingers, read by _____; his loyal stepsister Beatrice, read by _____; and the new kid in Coconut Grove, conscientious Roy, read by _____. Beatrice is taking Roy to meet Mullet Fingers who earlier ran ahead to the construction site. As Beatrice and Roy jump off their bikes, Roy hands Beatrice’s package of hamburger to Mullet Fingers.

Roy: (holding the package of meat) I’ll give you the meat when you tell me what it’s for. . . . What about those dogs?

Mullet Fingers: The dogs...are long gone.

Roy: (bluntly) Did you spraypaint that cop car?

Mullet Fingers: No comment.

Roy: And hide those alligators in the portable potties?

Mullet Fingers: No comment.

Roy: I don’t get it. Why would you try crazy stuff like that? Who cares if they build a stupid pancake house here?

Beatrice: My stepbrother got bit by the dogs because his arm got stuck when he reached through the fence. Now ask me why he was reaching through the fence.

Roy: Okay. Why?

Beatrice: He was putting out the snakes.

Roy: (exclaims) The cottonmouths! But why? You trying to kill somebody?

Mullet Fingers: (smiling) They couldn't hurt a flea, them snakes. I taped their mouths shut.

Roy: I'm so sure.

Mullet Fingers: Plus I glued sparkles on the tails, so they'd be easy to spot.

Beatrice: He's telling the truth, Eberhardt.

Roy: But come on...how do you tape a snake's mouth shut?

Beatrice: (with a dry laugh) Real carefully.

Mullet Fingers: Aw, it ain't so hard, if you know what you're doin'. See, I wasn't tryin' to hurt them dogs—just rile 'em up.

Beatrice: Dogs do NOT like snakes.

Mullet Fingers: Makes 'em freak out. Bark and howl and run around in circles. I knew the trainer would drag 'em outta here soon as he saw the cottonmouths. Those Rottweilers ain't cheap. The only part I didn't count on was getting' bit.

Roy: I'm almost afraid to ask, but what happened to your snakes?

Mullet Fingers: Oh, they're fine. I came back and got 'em all. Took 'em to a safe place and let 'em go free.

Beatrice: (chuckling) But first he had to peel the tape off their mouths.

Roy: (exasperated) Stop! Hold on right there.

Narrator: Roy's head was spinning with questions--these kids must be from another planet.

Roy: Would one of you please tell me what's all this got to do with pancakes? Maybe I'm dense, but I really don't get it.

Mullet Fingers: It's simple, man. They can't put a Mother Paula's here for the same reason they can't have big ole nasty Rottweilers runnin' loose.

Beatrice: (to her stepbrother) Show him why.

Narrator: Mullet Fingers scoops out a handful of ground beef, which he carefully rolls into six perfect little meatballs. He walks over to a hole in a grassy

patch of ground and places two hamburger balls at the entrance to hole.
He repeats this process with two other holes.

Roy: (peeking into one of the tunnels) What's down there?

Mullet Fingers: Hush!

Narrator: The boys return to where Beatrice is waiting, beside the bulldozer.

Beatrice: Well, Roy?

Roy: Well, what?

Mullet Fingers: Roy, listen.

Narrator: A short high-pitched coo-coo can be heard from near the holes.

Mullet Fingers begins to crawl towards the nearest hole. Roy follows.

Mullet Fingers: (pointing toward the burrow) Look!

Roy: (softly) Wow!

Narrator: There, standing by the hole and peering curiously at one of the meatballs, was the smallest owl that Roy had ever seen.

Mullet Fingers: (nudging Roy gently on the shoulder) Okay—NOW do you get it?

Roy: Yeah. I get it. Little owls live here.

Narrator: Now Roy understands how rottweilers, snakes, and endangered owls are connected to pancakes. What Roy must now figure out is how to do the right thing. Along the way, Carl Hiaasen's surprising and funny twists make *HOOT* a hoot of a read.

HOME OF THE BRAVES

By David Klass

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; Joe, Ed, and Coach Collins sit on tall stools.

Joe
X
Coach Collins
X
Ed
X
Narrator
X

Narrator: The following script is from David Klass’s contemporary realistic novel, *Home of the Braves*, the story of Joe Brickman’s senior year at Lawndale High School. Joe is coping with unsettling events and with decisions that will affect the rest of his life. He is the captain of his school’s soccer team which now includes a phenomenal new soccer player. The player is from Brazil where he was on the Junior National Soccer Team; at Lawndale High he is known simply as “The Phenom.” Not only does The Phenom change the dynamics of the soccer team, he is also beginning to date Joe’s best friend, Kristine. And, since school started, the bullying and violence at Lawndale High have been at an all time high although administrators and the police are trying to crack down. Joe’s friend and teammate, Ed, has been the target of Slade and his bullying gang. As the scene opens, Joe, read by _____, and Ed, read by _____, are jogging onto the soccer field and toward Coach Collins. The coach, read by _____, is ready for what will be The Phenom’s first day at practice. I am _____, the narrator.

Ed: I think it’s terrific that the police have finally stepped in and done something about the bullying. I feel safer already.

Joe: (doubtfully says) I hope you’re right, but listen, I talked to Slade this morning, and you should really hear what he had to say...

Ed: (Ed violently cuts Joe off) NO! I shouldn’t! I couldn’t care less what he said.

Joe: But he said I should warn you. You should at least hear...

Ed: (blurts out really loud and fast) NO, I SAID NO! Don't try to make me the victim, Joe. I don't want to hear any of that stuff Okay? Okay?

Joe: Suit yourself.

Narrator: They are about to start their warm-ups for soccer practice. There is a whole new crowd of spectators in the stands, fans that have never been there before to watch a practice. The most popular girls in school are there to watch the new Brazilian superstar.

Ed: Kristine must have brought the popular crowd with her. It's no secret she and The Phenom are an item.

Joe: What do you mean?

Ed: I saw them holding hands in the hall the other day. But I don't get why she's practically ditched all of her old friends to hang out with them.

Joe: (mutters) Well, I guess she's made some new friends.

Ed: Well it's weird for someone to change as fast as Kris has. Just look at her up there in the stands. No wonder she likes The Phenom so much; he's been juggling that soccer ball in the air for about five minutes now.

Joe: Whatever. He's not that great. Anyone could do that if they didn't have a life and practiced doing that stupid trick all the time.

Ed: And, would you look at that guy in the leather coat and yellow scarf over there near The Phenom. He must be The Phenom's rich dad. Oh, and look at the fat guy toting the camera. His decal is from the local cable channel.

Joe: (disgusted) Coach, could you ask that cameraman to stay off the field? He is a distraction for the whole team.

Coach Collins: Don't worry about it, Joe. It'll be great for publicity. Just put it out of your mind.

Joe: (turns to Ed) Why do we need publicity?

Ed: I don't know. I don't get it.

Narrator: Joe gathers the team together to begin practice.

Joe: Okay, guys, huddle up. Time to start practice! Begin with sit ups, guys! Make it hurt! Six inches to the death!

Coach Collins: (interrupts with a nervous look at the stands) Joe, you can't say that.

Joe: What?

Coach Collins: "To the death." You can't say anything like that anymore.

Joe: But, I always say it. Everyone knows what I mean.

Coach Collins: No mention of death. No mention of causing pain. The new policy is really clear. If you say it again, I'll have to report you. Don't put me in that position. We'll talk about this later.

Joe: Okay, guys. Three miles to the road and back. Last four losers to make it back take down the nets after practice--

Coach Collins: (interrupts) No. Students are not allowed to penalize or punish other students, or call them losers. That's hazing under the new policy, and it's strictly forbidden.

Joe: This is the way I've always run practice, and we never had a problem.

Coach Collins: I didn't make the rules, but I have to enforce them. And, so do you as captain. Right?

Joe: Right. (he takes a deep breath) Okay, everybody. We're going for a run, for fun. If you get tired, take a break. Slow down to a jog, or even walk if you need to. Don't worry if you lose, there's always another race tomorrow. Let's go.

Narrator: Joe's life is changing in many ways. The school and the friends he has known his whole life seem to be moving on without him. The two people he loves the most are not the people they always were, and Joe must decide who he is and what he wants for himself and his future in *Home of the Braves* by David Klass.

DUNK
By David Lubar

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern. The other readers sit on tall stools that are arranged in an arc.

X
Chad

X X

Jason Gwen

X X

Narrator Officer

Narrator: We are sharing a scene from David Lubar’s novel *Dunk*, a contemporary realistic novel set in a small New Jersey shore town during the summer between Chad’s the tenth and eleventh grade. Chad is the main character, read by _____. In the middle of this summer day, Chad is on the boardwalk, and he meets his friend Jason, read by _____. Jason, a super athlete, is in great shape. He hopes to play volleyball professionally as soon as he graduates from high school. Chad’s goals are more immediate. He wants to see if Gwen, the girl he had a silent crush on last year, is back working on the boardwalk this summer. Gwen is read by _____. And, on this day, he has an unexpected encounter with a police officer, read by _____. I am _____, the narrator. As the scene opens, Chad finds his best friend, Jason, practicing volleyball on the beach.

Jason: Hey, what’s up?

Chad: Not much. You’re looking good. That last spike was awesome.

Jason: Got my rhythm. I’m in the zone. Can’t complain. I think we’re in good shape for the tournament. We have a real shot at placing in the top three. Maybe even number one.

Chad: That would be great.

Jason: Sure would. We’re going to practice a bit longer. Want to hang around?

Chad: Yeah. (tiredly) I’m exhausted from chasing those balls around at the dunk tank. I may just crash here on the beach.

Narrator: Finally, a couple of hours later, Jason knocks off practice and comes over to where Chad is napping.

Jason: Ready? Wow. (takes a deep breath) That was a workout. Come on, let's see if we can sneak into the pool over at the Sandy Buggy Motel.

Narrator: As the boys climb the steps from the beach and head down the boardwalk, Jason abruptly stops and grabs his forehead. Chad realizes something is wrong, but Jason won't admit it. Chad grabs Jason's arm to lead him away when he notices Jason's skin feels cold and his arm is hanging limply at his side.

Chad: I think you're sick or something. Maybe you should just go home. Or come over to my place.

Jason: (in a slow, dazed voice) I feel okay. Couldn't be better. Perfect as a matter of fact.

Narrator: Chad is in a hurry to get Jason off the boardwalk before he starts acting any stranger. However, as they pass near the Cat-a-Pult booth he glances to see whether Gwen is back this summer.

Chad: (gasping) It's her. I can see her red hair. I wonder if she remembers me. How are you doing, Jason?

Jason: Fine.

Chad: Give me one second, okay? I'll be right back.

Jason: (slowly) No problem. I'll just sit on this bench and rest. I feel kind of like I did the other day. You remember. Just needed to rest.

Chad: You sure?

Jason: (sounding a little better) Take your time.

Narrator: Chad nervously approaches the game booth, keeping on the outskirts of the crowd waiting for Gwen to notice him. All the while his heart is beating like galloping horses. What if she doesn't remember him?

Gwen: (in happy surprise) Chad, it's you.

Chad: (relieved) Hi, Gwen...

Gwen: How are you?

Chad: Fine. You?

Gwen: Good. Real good.

Chad: You staying for the summer?

Gwen: (startled) What's that guy doing? He's going to hurt himself climbing on the back of that bench.

Chad: He's fine. He just likes to fool around. He must be feeling better.

Gwen: You know him?

Chad: Best friend--Jason. So when did you get here?

Gwen: Yesterday. I think your friend had a little too much of something.

Chad: Honest, there's nothing to worry about.

Gwen: If you say so. (loud gasp) He's fallen off the bench.

Chad: He's fine. See he's back on his feet. Oh man, he's getting back up on the top of the bench. He's just joking around. Probably annoyed that I stopped here. We were going swimming. I'll be right back. Don't go away, okay?

Gwen: I'm not going anywhere until my shift is done.

Chad: (calling to Jason) Hey, Jason, cut it out. You're making us look like dorks.

Narrator: As Chad approaches Jason fear knots his stomach. There is a look of emptiness in Jason's eyes, and Chad can see that Jason doesn't even recognize him. Jason is looking around wildly in a panic.

Chad: Come on, Jason. Get down. I'll take you home.

Officer: What's going on here?

Chad: Nothing's going on, officer.

Officer: Get off the back of that bench, kid.

Narrator: Jason doesn't pay any attention to the officer so the officer grabs his arms, pulling him down. Jason struggles hard, and the officer cuffs him.

Jason: (yelling) Let me go! You can't handcuff me. (moans as the scene progresses)

Chad: (panicked) Come on. Give him a break. He's sick. It's the flu or something. Hey!

Narrator: Chad finds himself flat on his stomach with a knee jammed into his back. The ratchet sound of handcuffs ends with a sharp pinch against his wrist bones. Other cops show up and herd the boys through the staring crowds to the street where they shove them into the back seat of a police car. Both boys continue to struggle. Jason kicks the grill that separates them from the cops.

Chad: (yelling) We didn't do anything.

Officer: What are you kids on? How much did you take? You might as well tell me. We're going to find out. Why make it hard on yourself? You're acting like an animal. (angrily) I'm not going to listen to this any longer.

Narrator: The officer flips on the siren and they speed towards the police station. As the cops drag the boys from the car, Jason freezes. Then his whole body jerks as though he is being electrocuted. He collapses, goes limp, and his eyes roll back. Chad tries to get to Jason, but they drag him into the station.

Chad: (in a panic) Help him!

Officer: Your friend's on the way to the hospital. He could be dying. I've seen it happen often enough. I've seen it all, kid. I've seen punks convulse so bad they bite off their own tongue. Fun, huh? Maybe if the doctors knew what kind of junk your buddy was on, they could save him. Or maybe you don't care.

Chad: You're wrong. He doesn't do that stuff. He would never take drugs.

Narrator: The officer does not believe Chad even after other officers search him and find nothing in his pockets. Chad is booked and locked in a cell. Read *Dunk* by David Lubar to find out what happens to Chad—but, more importantly, what's wrong with Jason.

FREE RADICAL
By Claire Rudolf Murphy

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern. Luke and Mom sit on stools, side by side, relatively close to one another to indicate an intimate conversation.

X
Narrator

X X
Luke Mom

NARRATOR: The following script is taken from *Free Radical*, by Claire Rudolf Murphy. In the book, 15-year-old Luke McHenry lives in Fairbanks, Alaska, with his Mother and new stepfather Sid. School has just ended, and Luke is excited about new friends he's made and about playing summer Little League. He's sure that this is the year he is going to make the All Star team. In this scene, Luke, read by _____, has just returned home from ball practice, and is surprised by a confession from his mother, read by _____. I, _____ am the narrator.

MOM: There's something I've been hiding from you.

LUKE: (jokingly) Yeah, I know. You dye your hair blond like half the women in America. You cheat on crossword puzzles—

MOM (interrupting, with a shaky voice): Stop it!

LUKE: (pleadingly) Mom, come on...

MOM: My real name is Mary Margaret Cunningham. I grew up in Spokane, in a big catholic family with three brothers and two sisters.

LUKE: (surprised and confused) What?!

MOM: When I was a freshman in college, I helped set a bomb--in the ROTC offices at Berkeley, to blow up their records, as a protest against the Vietnam War. That war was horribly wrong and killed thousands of innocent people.

LUKE: (pleadingly) Okay. But it was a long time ago, and it doesn't matter anymore. Come on, Mom. You've got a life here and now, which includes a new husband and your son.

MOM: (upset) That bomb killed a student. I didn't mean to, Luke. Please believe me. I didn't mean for that to happen.

LUKE: (shocked) Somebody died?

MOM: The campus was practically deserted. Most of the students had gone home early for summer. The bomb was set to go off at one o'clock in the morning. We had no idea that anybody would---

LUKE: (interrupting and covering his ears) I don't want to hear this!

MOM: I've been on the run from the FBI ever since.

LUKE: (shocked and angry, yelling) SHUT UP MOM! I don't want to know any of this!

MOM: (quietly). I'm going to California next month to turn myself over to the authorities. I was hoping you'd come with me.

LUKE: (angry) You've got to be kidding!

MOM: You need to understand how guilty I've felt all these years. No matter how hard I try, I can't seem to get over it.

LUKE: Well try harder!

MOM: Do you remember how on Thanksgiving and Christmas I would prepare a big dinner and then usually end up in bed with a migraine headache and a bout of depression?

LUKE: I remember your great walnut and cranberry stuffing. You just have a tough time with the cold and dark up here in the winter. Lots of people do.

MOM: (softly) No. It's more than that, honey. I couldn't be with my family. I kept thinking that if I cooked for people I loved, everything would be all right.

LUKE: You always used to tell me that I was all the family you needed.

MOM: The best thing I ever did was to bring you into the world. During my years on the run I'd given up my family and all my friends. When I found out I was pregnant, I couldn't give you up, too. Having a baby was the one gift I gave myself. I had hoped my child would never have to know about the horrible wrong I committed or the life I left behind. I thought we could live in our own little world, that my love would be enough. But I'm finally learning that I can't control my feelings of guilt about causing a death.

LUKE: The second best thing you could do Mom, is not turn yourself in. It isn't going to bring that kid back.

LUKE: (pleadingly) Please.

MOM: But the guilt is eating me alive, Luke. I tried to bury it, push it down deep in my soul, but it always returns. I can't live like this anymore, and you deserve to know who I really am.

LUKE: I do know...you're my mother. Are they still after you?

MOM: (shaking her head). I've been off of their Most Wanted list for probably 15 years. As far as I know, my photo's not displayed in any post offices.

LUKE: So why now? You and Sid just got married!

MOM: I can do this now because of Sid. Oh, Honey. I can't live like this any longer. And I have to see my folks before they die.

LUKE: Have them come up and visit. It's safe here. Alaska is a great place to hide.

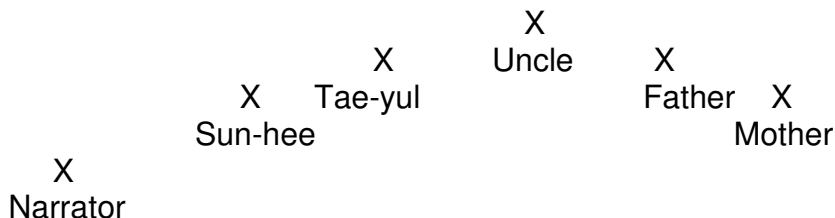
MOM: (sadly, shaking her head) Oh, Luke. If only that would do it.

NARRATOR: As the summer passes, Luke learns more about loss, courage, guilt, and forgiveness. And, he finds an identity he didn't know he had lost. Read *Free Radical* by Claire Murphy.

WHEN MY NAME WAS KEOKO

By Linda Sue Park

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; other readers sit on tall stools.



Narrator: Our presentation is from Linda Sue Park's novel, *When My Name Was Keoko*, set in Japanese-occupied Korea from 1940-1945. The Japanese are determined to remove all traces of Korean culture, and the characters Sun-hee, read by _____, and her brother, Tae-ful, read by _____, are a typical younger sister and older brother dealing with life in a country that no longer belongs to them. They have a close, proud family that includes their uncle, read by _____; their father, read by _____; and their mother, read by _____. I am _____, the narrator. As our scene opens, the Kim family, gather to deal with the Japanese order that all individual and family names be will changed from Korean to Japanese. It is an unhappy and significant event because terms of address are an important part of Korean culture. In addition to relationship, names signify rank, respect, and affection to a greater degree than their English equivalents. Sun-hee and Tae-yul's uncle speaks first.

Uncle: Brother!

Father: (shouting) I won't do it! They can't do this – they can't take away our names! I am Kim Young-chun; I will never be anything else!

Uncle: Read them the newspaper story.

Father: (reading) By order of the Emperor, all Koreans are to be graciously allowed to take Japanese names.

Uncle: (furiously) Graciously allowed! How dare they twist the words! Why can't they at least be honest? We are being forced to take Japanese names.

Father: The newspaper says we must all go to the police station in the next week to register.

Tae-yul: My name means “great warmth.” My grandfather, my father’s father, chose it. It’s one of our traditions for the grandfather to do the naming.

Sun-hee: He chose my name as well; it means “girl of brightness.”

Mother: He took it seriously. He wanted a name that would bring you good fortune.

Tae-yul: A different name? I cannot imagine it.

Father: Those who do not register will be arrested.

Uncle: (angrily) Let them! Let them arrest me! They will have my body, but not my soul- my name is my soul!

Father: Such talk is useless. It must be done. But let me think awhile. Yes, it must be done. Tae-yul, Sun-hee, you know the Kim clan is a large and important one. Long ago, all Kims lived in the same part of Korea, in the mountains. Choosing the word for gold as their name shows what a strong clan they were. Gold was only for kings. I have chosen our Japanese name. It will be Kaneyama. “Yama” means “mountain” in Japanese and “Ka-ne” means “gold.” So the name will honor our family history. They will not know this. But we will.

Uncle: (calmer now) Kaneyama. My brother has chosen well.

Father: As to our first names, Sun-hee fetch your primer.

Sun-hee: Yes, Father.

Tae-yul: I know that book. It was first mine; now it is Sun-hee’s.

Father: We will close our eyes and point. Whatever letter we point to we will choose a name that begins with this letter. These are not our real names, so we do not care what they are.

Uncle: (grinning) That’s very good, Brother. In fact, I do not care at all – you may choose my letter for me.

Father: (smiling) No, we will each choose for ourselves. Tae-yul, what letter have you selected?

Tae-yul: (pointing) My new initial is N. I will be Kaneyama Nobuo.

Sun-hee: (hesitantly pointing) I have K. I will be Keoko.

Narrator: For Sun-hee's whole life, Korea has belonged to Japan. She and her older brother Tae-Yul have grown up studying Japanese and speaking it at school. Their own language, Korean, can be spoken only at home, and some Korean things-like the flag-are not to be spoken of at all. The taking of Japanese names is just one step as the totalitarian regime ensures its control, rounding up neighborhoods, searching for resistance, and seeking Koreans for service in the Japanese military. However, Sun-hee finds truth and strength in her father's observation that the Japanese can burn her paper journal but not her words.

Chase: He's hit us. Quick cut the line. Hurry men patch that hole. Stuff your coats and shirts into the hole. Hurry! Quick! Bail the water. Lawrence, (pointing in another direction) now! Steer us back to the ship. We'll make a quick repair there while Nickerson heads toward the other two.

Narrator: The boat with Chase and Lawrence is swiftly secured to the Essex.

Nickerson: Look, I see something. (pointing) A whale! He's enormous. Look at the scars on his head.

Lawrence: He's not fleeing from us. He's acting strange.

Chase: Don't be alarmed. He'll go away.

Lawrence: Oh, no. He's coming down for us.

Chase: Put the helm hard up! Hurry!

Nickerson: He is coming too fast. He will hit us.

Narrator: Everyone is screaming as the whale rams into the front side of the ship. All of the crew members are knocked down. No one can speak or even believe what has just happened. The whale dives again and jolts the bottom of the boat with a tremendous force that shoots splintered timbers to the surface. Then, the whale swims along by the side of the boat.

Chase: Hand me that lance. I can kill him. He is getting close enough.

Nickerson: This is dicey. Is the whale so close that he will smash the rudder with his tail when he's harpooned?

Lawrence: Strike him! This is the chance!

Nickerson: He is dangerously close to the rudder! Look he is already thrashing the water with his tail.

Lawrence: Chase, now! Now is the time! He is pulling ahead.

Nickerson: No, here he is. He's is making for us again. He's coming faster than before. He's going to hit us.

Chase: Hang on! He is heading for the port bow.

Narrator: The crew is again jolted to the deck by the force of the whale which uses his tail to beat the boat down until water fills it. The Essex sinks as the whale swims off. Thus, an 80-ton sperm whale leaves the 20-man crew stranded 1,500 miles off the Galapagos Islands and 40 miles from

the equator—just about as far from land as it is possible to be. The men are adrift in three small, ill-equipped boats. Their horrific suffering includes hunger fed by cannibalism and dehydration that causes their tongues to swell beyond their mouths and their eyes to spill tears of blood. After three months, there are eight barely-alive survivors whose story becomes a legend and inspires another tale about an avenging whale: Herman Melville's *Moby Dick*.

NUMBERING ALL THE BONES

By Ann Rinaldi

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern; other readers sit on tall stools.

X
Eulinda

X
1st Lady

X
Guard

X
2nd Lady

X
3rd Lady

X
Narrator

Narrator: This reader's theatre adaptation is based on a scene from Ann Rinaldi's novel *Numbering All The Bones*, set during the Civil War. While making her way to the infamous prison at Andersonville to search for her brother Neddy, Eulinda is mistaken for a servant of one of the ladies in a group of white Southerners who have come for an afternoon's entertainment of viewing the prisoners. In this presentation, _____ is the prison Guard; _____ is Eulinda; _____ is the 1st Lady; _____ is the 2nd Lady; and _____ is the 3rd Lady. I am _____, the narrator.

Guard: Kin fit eight up there. (turning to Eulinda) You goin', girl?

Eulinda: Yes. (brief pause) Are the colored troops near here?

Guard: Cain't tell who all is near where. The coloreds got their own place, but those no-Count Yankees got no qualms 'bout mixin' the races.

Narrator: The guard hands each of the white Southerners a crust of bread. They all ascend the stairs. At the top of the landing, the ladies cover their noses with a lavender soaked handkerchief to ward off the prison's stench.

Guard: General Sidney Winder was in charge of startin' this prison in January of this year. He's skedaddled back to Richmond. Left Captain Henry Wirz in charge. The prison ain't as big as needed. They gonna make it bigger. It's about two-thirds done. By the end of February we already had two thousand prisoners. By now we figure the count must be near ten thousand.

1st Lady: No tents or barracks?

Guard: Ain't got any, Miss. What you see are shanties the men made from anythin' they kin get their hands on. They call them shebangs. You are now lookin' down on the south hillside, between the swamp and the stockade.

2nd Lady: What do they eat?

Guard: Last month they got a quart of tolerable-good meal, a sweet potato, and a piece of meat the size of a finger every day. This month the potato is gone, but they're given a quart of cow-peas for two hundred men a day. If'n they got any Yankee greenbacks, they kin buy from Confederate suttlers. Or local farmers. I've seen 'em eat anythin', even dog.

(For the next three lines, the readers respond simultaneously.)

1st Lady: How terrible!

2nd Lady: Disgusting! Horrible.

Eulinda: (shivering) Oh, no, no.

Narrator: The group looks out over thousands of prisoners—many of them wounded—dressed in rags penned in acres of muddy ground. Small fires burn. In addition to the awful stench, there is a hum in the air with a note of low rage and helplessness. Two of the ladies toss the bread crusts over the parapet, calling out to the prisoners who look longingly at the bread.

3rd Lady: (smiling) Why don't they get it?

Guard: Because it's inside the Dead Line. They go in there and they'll be shot dead.

Eulinda: Throw it further. Here, give it to me, I'll throw it.

Narrator: The 3rd Lady turns to Eulinda. Her smile fades as she grabs hold of Eulinda's arm.

3rd Lady: (yelling) You Yankees down there. See this gal up heah? Well, she's sister to y'all. Why y'all fightin'? Say "hello."

Narrator: Eulinda tries to pull away, but the lady won't let her move.

3rd Lady: (yelling) Well, come on, say "hello!"

Narrator: No one says anything. The woman laughs and releases Eulinda, who pulls away mortified.

3rd Lady: I heard tell y'all got women prisoners heah.

Guard: Three. Two were with their husbands in battle. They wear the uniform of the Union selder. T'other was with hers on a wedding trip when their boat was taken by one of our revenue cutters off the coast of North C'alina. Some say she just gave birth.

2nd Lady: Here? Gave birth in this horrible place?

Guard: Sure 'nuf. You wanna take in a boarder? Captain Wirz is lookin fer a local family to take her an' the baby in. She's a mortification to him. Cain't have a baby here.

Narrator: The ladies wave the guard off and the group starts down the steps. The show is over.

Guard: (grinning) We also got the grandson of Thomas Jefferson. At least that's what the black man calls hisself. Says his name is Thomas Eston Hemings. Can you beat that, ladies? A black man in a Yankee uniform who says he's grandson of Thomsas Jefferson. We got it all. Somthin' fer everybody. Send yer friends.

Narrator: Eulinda's brother Neddy has written to her about a black soldier who was Thomas Jefferson's grandson. If he were here, surely her brother is here as well. Eulinda knows she must go back to Mr. Hampton and convince him to fetch Neddy home. To find out how successful Eulinda is, read *Numbering All the Bones* by Ann Rinaldi.

Kayla: My mom's friend Brandi dug up your phone number and called last night.
(exasperated) So Dad came and got me this morning and brought me back here.

Stetson: (mouth hanging open)

Dad: (grinning)

Stetson: (slowly) She's your daughter?

Dad: I don't know why you stay in school, Stetson, dumb as you are. Yeah, she's my daughter, and that makes her your sister.

Kayla: (looking shocked) You're my brother?

Dad: (muttering) Great. Both of 'em are stupid.

Kayla: (angrily) I'm not stupid! But you haven't said anything about a brother all day!

Stetson: That's nothing. He hasn't said anything about you, ever.

Dad: That's because I didn't know about her. (belches)

Stetson: Mom was pregnant when she left?

Dad: Yeah, she saw what a lousy brat you were turning into, and decided she didn't want you around to rub off on the next baby!

Stetson: How old are you, Kayla?

Kayla: Fourteen.

Stetson: You look a lot older.

Dad: It's all the makeup. Your mother thought she could raise a kid better on her own, but all she succeeded in doing was making another problem.

Kayla: (loudly sighs and rolls her eyes)

Stetson: Dad, why didn't you tell me?

Dad: I told you, moron, I didn't know. The first I heard about her was when I got called last night.

Stetson: So why didn't you tell me last night? I would have gone with you to get her.

Dad: (sarcastically) I didn't think you'd want to miss any of your precious school time.

Stetson: (quietly) It would have been nice to at least see my mother's grave or meet some of her family.

Dad: Believe me, you didn't miss nothin'.

Kayla: (wipes her tears with the back of her hand)

Stetson: (awkwardly) I'm sorry about your-our-mother.

Kayla: (nods)

Dad: I'm the one you should feel sorry for. After all, now she's left me stuck with two of you.

Kayla: (angrily) You shut up! You shut up about my mother! You didn't know her. You're just some stupid white trailer trash and my mother was too good for you! You were never good enough for her! You can't possibly be my father!

Dad: You're the one who's gonna sit down and shut up, Missy. Else I'll be teaching you the manners your mother didn't.

Kayla: (shouting) I'm leaving! There's no way I'm gonna stay in this dump!

Dad: (laughing a harsh, angry laugh) Listen Stetson! You finally got an ally.

Kayla: You can't make me stay.

Dad: I wouldn't try. I've been trying to get Stetson to leave for a couple of years. But there's one thing you're forgetting, *daughter*. No one else wanted you.

Kayla: (flinching as if hit, then in a quiet voice) That's not true.

Dad: Why do you think Brandi called me?

Kayla: (desperately) The will. It had something to do with Mom's will. She left me in your custody.

Dad: (waving his hand) If they wanted you, they'd fight it. After all, I've never even laid eyes on you before. Your grandmother and Brandi have been around you since you were just a little snot. (harshly) They could get custody ...if...they... wanted...it.

Kayla: (looking wild-eyed, panicked and terrified)

Dad: (casually) You can go or you can stay. You saw how we came into town, so I'm sure you can find your way back out again.

Kayla: (mutters) I hate you.

Dad: You ain't known me long enough to hate me. Give it a few days, then you can mean it when you say it.

Narrator: Kayla's arrival changes Stetson's world and ultimately changes him forever. Together they must learn from their past and break the cycles that threaten their dreams. As they work together to build a car from salvage yard scraps, they begin building a relationship that will give them the strength to face their father and the chaos that his alcoholism brings to their lives. Read S. L. Rottman's *Stetson*.

HEIR APPARENT
By Vivian Vande Velde

Staging: The narrator stands at a lectern. Giannine sits on a tall stool. Mr. Rasmussem stands off to the other side.

X	X	X
Narrator	Giannine	Mr. Rasmussem

Narrator: I am _____, the narrator, in our presentation from the fourth chapter of Vivian Vande Velde's *Heir Apparent*. In this science fiction/supernatural novel, fourteen-year-old Giannine Bellisario, read by _____, has arrived at the Rasmussem Gaming Center to play a video game, and Giannine is upset because she has had to outsmart the computer-run transit authority and sneak past the picketers from the Citizens to Protect Our Children Group to enter the Center. Giannine, whose virtual name is Janine de St. Jehan, is playing a total immersion virtual reality game complete with memories, tastes, and smells. She has chosen a game that does not have just one set of right decisions, a game that consists of strategy and shifting alliances. At this point in the game, the king has died, and Janine de St Jehan, is next in line to win the throne or to die. Janine de St. Jehan is turning back to the castle when a blast of light comes into the sky. And, there in a cloud, stands Mr. Rasmussem, read by _____, a short, white-robed figure whose *Reebok'd* feet are hovering six inches from the ground.

Giannine: (perplexed) What now? Clouds out of nowhere again? And, what is this music, a harp? Did I die? Am I in Heaven? This is choir music, and it's sad. I don't think this is good.

Mr. Rasmussem: (said in a voice sounding firm and, to Giannine, like the voice of God in the videos) Giannine Bellisario!

Giannine: Who are you? I don't understand why you are calling me by my real name. Here, I am Janine de St. Jehan. This sure doesn't sound like any Rasmussem program I've heard of.

Mr. Rasmussem: Giannine Bellisario!

Giannine: (looking up so she can see him) You're not God, now that you're closer I can see you have on a lab coat and Reeboks. But this is St. Jehan!

Mr. Rasmussem: Giannine, this is Nigel Rasmussem. Now don't panic.

Giannine: I was doing fine until you showed up.

Mr. Rasmussem: There has been a slight emergency. Nothing to worry about.

Giannine: (beginning to hyperventilate) What?

Mr. Rasmussem: People from the Society to Protect Our Children have broken into the building. They have damaged our equipment. Don't worry. There is no physical danger to your body. The police have removed the intruders.

Giannine: What do you mean emergency? What do you mean "no physical damage"?

Mr. Rasmussem: We are working to regain control. There are fail-safe measures to keep external stimuli, like power failures or surges, from affecting your mental state. But while these safeguards are in effect, you will find it difficult to exit the Heir Apparent program.

Giannine: I am stuck here!

Mr. Rasmussem: The only route is to complete the game successfully. Unsuccessful solutions will only loop you back to the start of the program.

Giannine: (breathing normally again) I can do that. Are you letting me get extra tries?

Mr. Rasmussem: Unfortunately, this is the last time we will be able to communicate with you. And unfortunately, I cannot tell you the solution to the game since there is no one single right path. There are an infinite number of permutations, depending on which characters you take into your confidence, how you react to the problems with which you will be presented, and what policies you set for your government.

Giannine: (her voice rising) Mr. Rasmussem, if there are an infinite number of right ways then does that mean an infinite number of wrong ways that will send me back on that hill in St. Jehan?

Mr. Rasmussem: Now don't panic. All you have to do is play the game as well as you can and as quickly as you can.

Giannine: Quickly, Wait! Wait!

Narrator: Mr. Rasmussem begins to float upward again and the heavenly choir hums. The clouds take on a pink hue, and Mr. Rasmussem seems to be talking to someone else, or is he arguing?

Mr. Rasmussem: (in a stage whisper) No this is foolish. She needs to know the urgency. (in his powerful and firm voice) What I said before isn't entirely accurate. I don't want to frighten you. You should be fine. But there is no time to waste. The prolonged direct stimulation to your brain is dangerous. The longest game we have is supposed to be over in an hour, and our equipment would normally be safe for up to five times that exposure. But with the damage these people have inflicted, your safety zone is much, much less. We don't know how long you have, but the longer you're in the game, the more you risk fatal overload.

Giannine: Overload? What do you mean fatal overload? Wait! Wait!

Mr. Rasmussem: (calling downward) Advice: Kenrick and Sister Mary Ursula don't work well together.

Giannine: Who in the world is Sister Mary Ursula?

Mr. Rasmussem: (his voice fading) and next time don't forget the ring.

Giannine: (shouting) What ring?

Mr. Rasmussem: And, whatever you do, don't

Narrator: Of course, Giannine cannot understand what is said. However, the company has used the slight residual power in the grids to make contact with her and has down played the risk in order to prevent Giannine's growing anxiety from incapacitating her. Officials are working to devise contingency plans to disconnect her in case of system failure before she completes the game, and the legal department is working to cover

potential risks. The Rasmussem Gaming Center does not want to be the first virtual reality company with a fatality. Its future and Giannine's future depend upon her speed and strategy in Vivian Vande Velde's *Heir Apparent*.