

ALICE'S BIRTHDAY SURPRISE

A one-act comedy by
Katherine Dubois

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CAST OF CHARACTERS

ALICE
BONNIE
CAMILLE
DARIYA
ERIC
FERNANDO
GWEN
HAL
IAN
JUANITA
KIRA
LUCY
MIKAYLA
NATALIE
OWEN
PENNY
QUINN
ROBERTA
SETH
TROY
URSULA
VICKI

SETTING

A middle school corridor. The present.

SCENE 1

(The setting is a middle-school corridor. At rise, ALICE enters laden down with rolls of wrapping paper, ribbon, and streamers. She wears purple. BONNIE, CAMILLE, and DARIYA enter from the opposite direction.)

ALICE: Hi, Bonnie. Hi, Camille. Hi, Dariya, how are you feeling?

BONNIE: Hi, Alice.

CAMILLE: Do you need a hand with all that?

ALICE: I'm good. Dariya, if you want to borrow my lab notes they're in my bag. Are you better?

DARIYA: Actually, it wasn't me who was sick. It was Pembleton.

ALICE: Oh, poor little bunny. Is he okay?

DARIYA: The vet says he's going to be fine. But I was really worried. I've never seen him like that before. Did you finish the lab?

ALICE: We got all the data, but she's giving us till Thursday to finish the write-up.

DARIYA: I'll copy your notes at lunch, then. Thanks.

BONNIE: *(Indicating wrapping paper:)* Whose birthday is it, Alice?

ALICE: Lucy's.

BONNIE: If Math Club lets out before first bell I'll stop by her locker and help you finish.

ALICE: Thanks, Bonnie. Good luck in the chess tournament today, Camille. I heard you beat Eric yesterday.

CAMILLE: Yeah, but today I'm playing Xia, and she's really smart. I mean, not that Eric isn't, but Xia's going to be tough.

ALICE: You're smart, too, Camille.

CAMILLE: Well—

DARIYA: And Alice wouldn't just say that 'cos she's your friend.

BONNIE: One of us might, but not Alice. She's the nice one.

ALICE: (*Laughing:*) Oh, you guys. Look, I gotta get going.

DARIYA: See you later.

(Exit Alice.)

BONNIE: Well, she is.

CAMILLE: Who's arguing? Alice is the sweetest girl in school.

BONNIE: I saw her helping one of the sixth graders the other day. He had this enormous poster that was taller than he was. She helped him carry it to Ms. Markel's room.

CAMILLE: Remember that time Juanita forgot her lunch and was too embarrassed to tell anybody? Alice noticed Juanita wasn't eating and shared her lunch with her.

DARIYA: You know what? I just remembered. It's Alice's birthday tomorrow.

BONNIE: Really?

DARIYA: Lucy told me once that Alice's birthday is the day after hers.

BONNIE: And if today is Lucy's birthday—

CAMILLE: Alice's is tomorrow.

DARIYA: Yep, you really are the smart one.

CAMILLE: We should do something for her.

BONNIE: You're right, Camille.

CAMILLE: Put balloons on her locker or something.

DARIYA: Or bake her a cake.

BONNIE: We should think of something really special, that she won't be expecting.

DARIYA: She has a terrific sense of humor. Let's do something crazy that will make her laugh.

CAMILLE: Like what, Dariya?

BONNIE: Could you bring Pembleton to school? She loves bunnies. And she can't have pets at home because her mom's allergic.

DARIYA: It probably wouldn't be good for him right after he's been sick.

CAMILLE: Let's everybody think on it and we'll get back together just before first period. Okay?

BONNIE: Sounds good. Good luck with your game, Camille.

CAMILLE: Thanks, Bonnie.

DARIYA: Yeah, good luck. See you guys later.

(Exit Bonnie, Camille, and Dariya. Enter ERIC and FERNANDO. Fernando carries a video camera.)

ERIC: Have to find a good spot.

FERNANDO: What about here? Lots of people pass by here. We can get a lot of candid shots, and say in the voice-over that the subjects were observed in their natural habitat.

ERIC: Not sure the light's good enough here.

FERNANDO: The cafeteria, then. Over by the windows.

ERIC: But Fernando, people are always so rowdy in the cafeteria.

FERNANDO: That's good, though, Eric. That ties in with the assignment to study a mammal and observe its behaviors. Well, eating ties in with basic survival behaviors. I mean, every animal has to eat, right? And talking and playing games comes under social relationships.

ERIC: And what if someone gets wild and damages the camera? Mr. C. would make us pay for it. It's checked out to us, Fernando.

FERNANDO: Then what do you suggest?

ERIC: We need enough space to set up the camera angles. Want it to look professional.

FERNANDO: Eric? Do you think we could enter it in the Oscars? They have a category for documentaries and stuff.

ERIC: Somehow I doubt it.

FERNANDO: It was a brilliant idea to choose humans for our subject. Humans are mammals, after all, but I bet nobody else thinks of it.

ERIC: We're wasting time. Haven't got any footage yet.

FERNANDO: How about in front of the office, then? I know. We could leave the camera running somewhere and then do this cool montage that would show the entire school day.

ERIC: We can't let this camera out of our sight. Valuable piece of equipment.

FERNANDO: Let's start with the side entrance, then. Where everybody gets dropped off. We're supposed to cover methods of locomotion, right? So you've got cars, and bikes, and people walking.

ERIC: All right. At least it's a start.

(Exit Eric and Fernando. Enter GWEN, HAL, IAN, and JUANITA. They carry musical instruments.)

GWEN: Tell me again why we're going to practice in the janitor's closet?

HAL: The acoustics are great in there, Gwen. Just wait till you hear.

IAN: Knock it off, Hal. Tell Gwen the real reason.

JUANITA: The real reason is those swine from Warlock Middle School.

GWEN: Warlock? I've never heard of it. What are you talking about, Juanita?

HAL: She means Wharton Middle School. You tell her, Ian.

IAN: We entered this same competition last year. Practiced our fingers off. Well, someone from Wharton found out what piece we were playing, and they did the same number. But they were before us on the program, so it looked like we were copying them.

JUANITA: So they walked off with the prize that should have been ours. That's why I called them warlocks. Black magic.

GWEN: Couldn't it just have been a coincidence?

HAL: Gwen, Gwen, Gwen. You're far too trusting.

IAN: Juanita thought she saw someone from Wharton one day before school, right after we finished practicing.

JUANITA: I didn't think I saw them, Ian. I saw them. Him, that is. His name's Owen Pickford. His big brother dated my sister for a while.

GWEN: You mean he spied on you?

JUANITA: And took the information back to his band.

IAN: We never had any proof.

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HAL: But this year we're not taking any chances. We're representing our school and our school's band. There's honor at stake here.

IAN: You said it, Hal.

HAL: So into that janitor's closet.

(Enter Alice.)

ALICE: Hi, guys. Good luck with that band competition. I'll be there rooting for you.

JUANITA: Thanks, Alice.

ALICE: What song are you playing this year?

HAL: Can't tell you that, Alice. State secret. Have to kill you if we did.

GWEN: Hal!

HAL: All right, then. Lock you in the janitor's closet until after the competition.

IAN: But then she couldn't come cheer us on.

HAL: Better not tell her, then.

ALICE: Well, good luck whatever you're playing. I guess I'll let it be a surprise.

JUANITA: There's certain other people we need to surprise.

GWEN: It's nothing against you, Alice.

ALICE: Fine with me.

(Exit Alice.)

GWEN: We could have trusted Alice. She's so nice.

HAL: Sometimes it's the nice ones who fall into the traps set by the enemy for their nefarious purposes.

JUANITA: Nefarious? You haven't picked up a book lately or anything, have you, Hal?

HAL: No, but I watched a spy movie the other night.

JUANITA: We'll take care there's no spies this year. I'm glad Alice is coming to hear us play.

IAN: She's got a lot of school spirit.

GWEN: You know, tomorrow's her birthday. We should play her "Happy Birthday" or something when she gets to school.

HAL: It needs to be something more original than "Happy Birthday."

JUANITA: She loves bunnies. What about "The Bunny Hop"?

GWEN: And we could all wear bunny ears. And purple. She loves purple. See what you can find in your closets that's purple. And I'll stop by the party store and get bunny ears for all of us.

JUANITA: Perfect!

IAN: Wait a minute, you two. Bunny ears?

JUANITA: What, are you scared to look silly?

IAN: Course not. It's just – well – silly.

GWEN: It'll be hilarious. Alice will love it.

JUANITA: C'mon, Ian. How many times has Alice helped you with a science lab?

IAN: Well, there was the one time I might have electrocuted myself if she hadn't noticed –

GWEN: Bunny ears it is, then.

HAL: And who's finding the music to "The Bunny Hop"? As if we don't already have enough to practice.

JUANITA: It's not that hard.

GWEN: I know something even easier. You can dance the Bunny Hop to practically any tune if the meter's right. Now, what's the first piece we ever learned when we started band?

IAN: "Hot Cross Buns."

GWEN: Exactly. "Hot Cross *Buns*." Get it? Bunnies? Buns?

IAN: Bit of a stretch, Gwen.

JUANITA: But on the plus side, we all know it.

HAL: And now let's practice. For the competition, I mean.

(Exit Gwen, Hal, Ian, and Juanita. Enter KIRA and LUCY.)

KIRA: That was so sweet of Alice. Wasn't it, Lucy? Decorating your locker like that? I can't believe she remembered it was your birthday.

LUCY: Alice totally remembers birthdays, Kira. But mine's easy because it's the day before hers.

KIRA: Alice's birthday is tomorrow? Lucy, we should do something.

LUCY: You know, I was thinking about that last night. You know that show on TV, *Middle School Madness*?

KIRA: The one with Vicki Dakota? Where she goes around live to different schools and interviews people about what's hot? I love that show. Did you know Vicki Dakota is only two weeks older than I am?

LUCY: I know – her whole crew is teens, the camera guy and everything. It's so awesome.

KIRA: I love that show.

LUCY: So does Alice. We were talking one day how cool it would be if they ever came here.

KIRA: They'll never come here.

LUCY: Why not, Kira? We have as good a chance as any school.

KIRA: Is that what you want to do for Alice's birthday? Persuade Vicki Dakota to come here and interview her? How will you ever pull that off? Lucy, that would be amazing.

LUCY: Well, it would be, but that's not what I'm thinking.

KIRA: Then what?

LUCY: Have you ever seen me with a blonde wig?

KIRA: No.

LUCY: And glasses?

KIRA: You don't wear glasses.

LUCY: Wicked awesome glasses, like a certain TV show host wears? And I have a stretchy red sweater like she always—

KIRA: You mean you'd dress up like Vicki Dakota? And make Alice think she was on TV?

LUCY: You got it.

KIRA: Do you really think it would fool her? She'd know you weren't Vicki Dakota.

LUCY: I look so much like her, Kira. Totally I do. I could fool her own camera crew.

KIRA: Camera. We'd need a camera. If we were going to fool Alice into thinking she's on *Middle School Madness*.

LUCY: We can get our hands on a camera. We can check one out from the library.

KIRA: But who—

LUCY: You, of course.

KIRA: Me?

LUCY: Dress so she won't recognize you. The camera person never shows on the air, anyway. I'll keep her distracted. And besides, she'll be so excited, she'll only notice the camera.

KIRA: What are you going to ask her?

LUCY: The kind of stuff Vicki Dakota would ask her. "Don't be shy—the world wants to know: what's your fav-o-rite activity?"

KIRA: Oh, you said that just like her. Lucy, you're great.

LUCY: I watch her all the time.

KIRA: Alice will die laughing when she finds out it's you. It's just the sort of joke she'd love. Be sure you ask her what's her favorite animal. Oh! And favorite color. Oh, oh. I know. Ask her about the most embarrassing thing that ever happened to her.

LUCY: Oh, that would be hilarious. This'll be so much fun.

KIRA: Can you put together your disguise in one night?

LUCY: I've already got it—I was going to be her for Halloween. Let's go get the camera.

KIRA: What a blast. Alice will love it.

LUCY: But keep it quiet. It's got to be a surprise.

(Exit Lucy and Kira. Enter Alice.)

ALICE: So I'm going to be on *Middle School Madness*, am I? What a great joke. Kira's right—I will love it. But I'll love it even more when I turn the joke on them. I'll answer something crazy. They won't know what to think. Lucy *does* look a little bit like Vicki Dakota. I never noticed it before. What a great birthday I'll have. It'll be a big surprise—for someone.

(Exit Alice. Enter MIKAYLA, NATALIE, and OWEN.)

MIKAYLA: I don't get it. The band room was empty.

NATALIE: The competition's next week. They have to be practicing. Maybe they're suspicious. Can we really pull off the same trick two years in a row?

OWEN: That's the only thing that makes it a really good trick, is to pull it off more than once. To turn it into a tradition that we can hand down to the Wharton band students who come after us.

NATALIE: Oh, Owen.

OWEN: I'm serious.

MIKAYLA: I still remember the looks on their faces from last year, when we got up and played their piece before them.

NATALIE: Are we sure we'll be first this year?

OWEN: I can arrange that, Natalie.

NATALIE: How, Owen?

OWEN: My mom's one of the volunteers.

MIKAYLA: But your mom's not going to help us play a trick on another school. At least, not if she's anything like my mom. She doesn't even think it should be a competition. "It's an honor to be chosen to represent your school. We should celebrate all the schools and not pit them against each other." Blah, blah, blah. All about art and all that. I try to tell her the world's all about who's best, and then she just mentions the United Nations or something.

NATALIE: My mom's like that, too, Mikayla. "It doesn't matter if you win, Natalie, I'm so proud of you already."

MIKAYLA: "It's such an accomplishment."

NATALIE: "Sharing your love of music is what's really important."

MIKAYLA: But Owen, so your mom is actually interested in helping you win?

OWEN: She'd never do anything to give us an advantage. Not if she knew we were up to something sneaky. What I told her last year was, it sure would be great if we could go early in the program, so we can enjoy the other groups more without worrying about our own performance.

NATALIE: You make it sound almost educational.

OWEN: It's a knack I have. I found a study on the internet that chocolate increases cognitive function? Now she lets me take a candy bar with me to school whenever I have a test.

MIKAYLA: You lucky duck.

NATALIE: Milk or dark?

OWEN: Milk chocolate actually performed a little higher.

NATALIE: Good, I like the milk better.

MIKAYLA: This isn't getting us anywhere, guys. Where are they practicing?

NATALIE: We should be able to hear them.

OWEN: Let's try down this way. Boy, won't they be surprised when they hear us play.

(Exit Owen, Natalie, and Mikayla. Enter Kira and Lucy.)

KIRA: I can't believe all the cameras are checked out. What are we going to do?

LUCY: Your parents don't have one at home, do they?

KIRA: No. But one of our friends must have a video camera we could borrow.

LUCY: It has to look professional.

KIRA: Oh, we have to find one. It's going to be the best surprise.

(Enter Eric and Fernando with their camera.)

FERNANDO: Maybe Mrs. Rozales in the office would let us film the kids coming in for late slips.

ERIC: Then we'd need a late slip.

LUCY: Eric! Fernando! Hi.

KIRA: Hi, guys.

FERNANDO: Oh, hi, Kira. Hi, Lucy.

LUCY: Gee, what a great camera. Where'd you guys get it?

FERNANDO: Mr. C. It belongs to the science department. We're using it for our mammals project.

KIRA: You know, Lucy and I really need a camera tomorrow morning, and that one would be just perfect. Could we borrow it for a little teeny tiny bit? We'd give it right back.

ERIC: No.

LUCY: Aw, come on, Eric.

ERIC: It's an expensive piece of equipment and it's checked out to us.

LUCY: We only need it for a little bit.

KIRA: It's for Alice's birthday. We have a plan to surprise her. And you and Alice are the best in the whole school at science, Eric. Wouldn't you like to help us surprise Alice for her birthday?

LUCY: We'd totally be done with it before first period.

ERIC: We're using it. Collecting footage for another week at least, and then we'll begin editing.

KIRA: Please, Eric?

ERIC: No. (*He turns to Fernando:*) Not the office. But let's see if they'll let us do some filming in the kitchen. Tie that in with shots from the cafeteria during lunch.

(He exits. Fernando follows, shrugging his apologies to the girls.)

LUCY: Selfish boys.

KIRA: Let's go ask Mr. C. if he has another one.

(Exit Kira and Lucy. Enter Bonnie and Dariya.)

DARIYA: So I asked Ms. Haifa, the art teacher, if she had any balloons left over from that papier mâché project we did, and she gave me a whole bag. There must be about a hundred. Should I use them all or pick out the purple ones?

BONNIE: A hundred balloons! Wow, Dariya, that would be so cool.

(Enter Camille.)

CAMILLE: I won! I've made it to the semi-finals.

DARIYA: That's great, Camille.

BONNIE: Congratulations! You're so smart. I'm terrible at chess.

CAMILLE: You're in Math Club, Bonnie, there's no reason you couldn't be good at chess. I'll teach you some strategy sometime.

DARIYA: When's your semi-final round?

CAMILLE: Not till Thursday.

BONNIE: Who do you play?

CAMILLE: It'll either be Tilda or Ayush, depending who wins tomorrow.

DARIYA: I'm so excited for you, Camille.

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CAMILLE: Oh, and I had a great idea for Alice's birthday tomorrow.

BONNIE: What?

DARIYA: Tell us.

CAMILLE: Get this: You know how Alice loves bunnies, right? And remember the White Rabbit in *Alice in Wonderland*? *Alice in Wonderland*, get it?

BONNIE: Yeah, but—

CAMILLE: So one of us should dress up in a bunny costume and give her a cupcake, with a little note on it that says, "eat me." Like in the book, right? The little cakes that make her get bigger or smaller? "Eat me"? Don't you think it's brilliant?

DARIYA: Oh, totally. You should do that, Camille.

CAMILLE: Oh. Actually, I thought maybe one of you could—

BONNIE: I have a great idea, too.

DARIYA: What's yours, Bonnie?

BONNIE: You know Seth Cole's my cousin, right?

CAMILLE: I never knew that. Seth Cole, the singer? Who's like, totally awesome?

DARIYA: And totally cute? He's your cousin?

BONNIE: And he's coming to visit. He gets in tonight. And so I thought maybe I could persuade him to come to school tomorrow and ask Alice out on a date. You know, take her out for lunch someplace. It wouldn't have to be anyplace fancy.

DARIYA: Why not? As long as she's back by fifth period. That's a great idea.

BONNIE: Well, I'll have to see if he'll do it.

CAMILLE: That would be awesome. Seth Cole is so talented.

DARIYA: And so cute.

BONNIE: So let's go over everything. Dariya's doing balloons, I'll talk to Seth, and Camille will get a bunny suit.

CAMILLE: Actually, I thought maybe one of you could wear the bunny suit. But I'll bake the cupcakes.

BONNIE: Why don't you want to wear the bunny suit?

CAMILLE: I – I'm not sure I have the nerve.

(Enter PENNY and QUINN. They stop when they see the other girls.)

I don't know if I could go through with it.

BONNIE: Sure you can. Just remember what this is for. Now Dariya. What about your end? Do you think you can blow them all up by yourself?

DARIYA: Don't worry about that. I have it all planned out.

BONNIE: All right then. Be sure to keep quiet about it so no one suspects.

(The bell rings.)

DARIYA: There's the first bell. We'd better get to class. See you, Bonnie. Bye, Camille.

BONNIE: I'd better run to my locker. Bye, Dariya.

CAMILLE: Me, too. Bye.

(They exit.)

PENNY: Did you hear what they said? Something about they have to go through with it. Something about blowing something up. They're going to blow up the school building. It's a plot. We have to go to the police.

QUINN: Penny, are you sure?

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PENNY: Or maybe the principal first.

QUINN: No, I mean, are you sure that's what they were talking about?

PENNY: Didn't you hear them, Quinn? She said it as plain as day, and then the other one said she had it all planned out.

QUINN: But maybe they were talking about—I don't know. Something else. Don't you think it might have been something else, Penny?

PENNY: Quinn, who talks about blowing things up unless they're planning something terrible? We have to tell someone.

QUINN: But—but that one, Camille I think her name is. She played in the chess tournament this morning.

PENNY: So?

QUINN: So she's really smart, Penny.

PENNY: That proves it, don't you see?

QUINN: It does?

PENNY: All that pressure, always getting good grades. She must have snapped. And besides, all three of them were eighth graders, weren't they?

QUINN: I think so.

PENNY: You see?

QUINN: No. See what?

PENNY: Hormones. That proves it, Quinn.

QUINN: Hormones? What are they?

PENNY: I don't know. But I know they make people behave weird. My sister has them. Sometimes they make her burst into tears and stomp around and slam doors. Over nothing.

My mom says it's the hormones, that she can't really help herself.

QUINN: But they can't make someone blow up the school, can they?

PENNY: We can't take a chance. We have to tell someone.

(Enter ROBERTA.)

ROBERTA: You two don't want to be late to class. The first bell's already rung.

QUINN: You're on Student Council, aren't you?

ROBERTA: Yes, I'm Roberta Clark. Actually, I'm president of StuCo this year.

QUINN: We could tell her, Penny. She'd know what to do.

ROBERTA: Tell me what?

PENNY: We heard some kids talking about blowing up the school.

ROBERTA: What? Are you sure?

PENNY: We heard them. They're plotting something horrible.

ROBERTA: Who is it?

PENNY: Three girls. Eighth graders.

QUINN: One of them's in the chess tournament. I think her name's Camille.

ROBERTA: Camille Weingartner?

PENNY: And I heard her call one of them Dariya, or something like that. And the other one they called Bonnie. I think she was the ringleader.

ROBERTA: Camille and Bonnie and Dariya? They're three of the best students in the school.

QUINN: We think maybe it's the stress.

ROBERTA: I'm sure you must have made a mistake. They'd never do anything like –

PENNY: We should tell the principal. Or call the police.

ROBERTA: I'll tell you what. You did the right thing coming to me. I'll look into it, all right? And if there's any danger at all I'll go straight to the authorities. I know where their lockers are, I'll listen in on their conversation between periods.

PENNY: Don't you think it would be better –

ROBERTA: Don't you worry. I'll find out what's going on. You'd better get to class. And don't worry, you're perfectly safe.

(Exit Penny and Quinn.)

Camille and Bonnie and Dariya? I can't believe – but I have to take it seriously. I'd never forgive myself if something terrible happened and I could have prevented it.

(Exit Roberta. Enter Mikayla, Natalie, and Owen.)

MIKAYLA: Where could they be? We didn't hear a peep.

NATALIE: Do you think they're practicing at someone's house?

OWEN: They'll be in class soon. And we'd better get to our own school. We'll have to come back again tomorrow.

NATALIE: All right. Meet you here, tomorrow morning.

(They exit. Enter Gwen, Juanita, Hal, and Ian.)

JUANITA: We'd better get going, we'll be late.

HAL: That was productive, though. I think we're ready.

IAN: Ready? We're going to blow them away.

(They exit. Enter Penny and Quinn.)

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PENNY: Did you hear? "Blow them away." They're in on it, too.

QUINN: Why were they coming out of the janitor's closet, Penny?

PENNY: Isn't it obvious, Quinn? They were plotting. They didn't want to be overheard. We have to find that girl from Student Council. What was her name?

QUINN: Roberta. Let's go this way.

(They exit. Enter Roberta from the other side.)

ROBERTA: Here come Bonnie and Camille. I hope they don't see me.

(She turns her back. Enter Bonnie and Camille.)

BONNIE: Of course you can do it, Camille.

CAMILLE: Won't you, Bonnie?

BONNIE: Besides, if you're wearing a bunny suit, no one will recognize you. They won't know it's you.

CAMILLE: I don't know. I just—

BONNIE: You want to help us do this, don't you?

CAMILLE: I do, I just—

BONNIE: It was your idea.

CAMILLE: I know. But you'd do it better, I know you would. Please?

BONNIE: Well, all right.

CAMILLE: I have the bunny suit. My mom wore one once for some fundraiser. I'll bring it tomorrow, and meet you before school.

BONNIE: All right. We'd better hurry and get to class.

(They exit.)

ROBERTA: Who would wear a bunny suit to blow up the school? It doesn't make sense. But it gives me an idea. I'll wear a bunny suit to school tomorrow, and see if I can find Dariya. She'll think I'm Bonnie or Camille and maybe I can find out what's going on. And if they are plotting something dangerous, I'll still have time to notify someone. That's what I'll do.

(The second bell rings.)

Ooh, I'd better hurry.

(She exits. End Scene 1.)

SCENE 2

(The same, the next morning. Enter Kira and Lucy from opposite sides.)

KIRA: Lucy. Did you find a camera?

LUCY: No! What are we going to do?

KIRA: I checked the library again, they're all still out.

LUCY: Oh, Kira, and this was going to be so perfect.

(Enter Fernando with the camera.)

KIRA: Fernando!

LUCY: Hi, Fernando.

FERNANDO: Hi, Kira. Hi, Lucy.

LUCY: So, this is for the science project, huh? What are you guys doing yours on?

FERNANDO: Eric doesn't want me to tell anyone—it's a secret. We're doing humans—isn't that great? Isn't that the best idea? Because everyone knows humans are mammals, but nobody thinks about it. Oh. Don't let Eric know I told you.

LUCY: That's a great idea.

KIRA: That's brilliant, Fernando.

LUCY: Do you want to film us?

FERNANDO: Well, we're trying to get candid shots. Like if you were filming a wild animal in its natural habitat.

KIRA: You mean, like people eating lunch in the cafeteria?

FERNANDO: That's right. And the different ways they get to school.

LUCY: Are you filming anything this morning?

FERNANDO: Well, Eric isn't here yet –

LUCY: So you're not actually using the camera just this minute.

FERNANDO: Not this minute.

LUCY: So if we needed to borrow it for just a minute, if we got it right back to you, that would be okay.

KIRA: We can have it back to you before first period.

LUCY: It's for Alice's birthday. We're going to play a fun joke on her.

KIRA: We know she'll think it's hilarious.

LUCY: But we really, really need a camera and we can't find another one anywhere.

KIRA: You don't mind, do you? If we have it for just a little bit? We'll bring it back to you as soon as we're done.

LUCY: Alice is so nice and we just want to make her birthday a really fun one. Please, Fernando?

KIRA: Since you're not using it right now, anyway. Please?

FERNANDO: What are you going to use it for?

KIRA: You know that TV show, *Middle School Madness*? With Vicki Dakota?

LUCY: Well, with a blonde wig and glasses, I look totally like Vicki Dakota.

KIRA: So we're going to make Alice think she's being interviewed on live television.

LUCY: It's just the kind of joke she'll love.

KIRA: But we need a camera to make it believable. We'll bring it right back.

FERNANDO: Well, all right. I'll meet you back here after the first bell.

KIRA: Thank you.

LUCY: Thank you, Fernando. C'mon, Kira, we need to go change.

(Exit Lucy and Kira. Enter Eric.)

ERIC: There you are. Thought this morning we'd—where's the camera?

FERNANDO: Oh, I lent it to Lucy and Kira.

ERIC: What!

FERNANDO: They said they'd bring it back before first period.

ERIC: Mr. C. checked out that camera to us. We're responsible for it. If anything happens to it—

FERNANDO: Nothing's going to happen to it.

ERIC: Those girls asked for it yesterday and I told them no. Why did you give it to them?

FERNANDO: Well, you weren't here and I—

ERIC: How will we finish our science project if they break the camera, or lose it? What right do they have to our camera? Lot of nerve. Well, I'll just go find it, that's what I'll do. Think they can come breezing in here...

(And he is out. Fernando shrugs and follows. Enter Bonnie and SETH.)

BONNIE: Seth, I have to go change.

SETH: Well, don't just leave me standing in the middle of the hall.

BONNIE: Don't just stand there, go find Alice.

SETH: I've never even met Alice, Bonnie. How am I going to find her?

BONNIE: I told you. She'll be wearing purple. She loves purple.

SETH: So I'm supposed to walk up to the first girl I meet who's wearing purple and ask her out to lunch?

BONNIE: Sure, that'll work. But be romantic. You know. She's a big fan of yours. She'll be sure to recognize you. But I have to find Camille and change into her bunny suit. Thanks, Seth.

SETH: I've done some crazy things before—

BONNIE: You'll like Alice—she's really sweet. And it's only just lunch. See you in a bit.

SETH: See ya, Bonnie.

(Exit Bonnie. Enter Gwen, wearing purple. Seth approaches her.)

Excuse me.

GWEN: Oh, my gosh, you're Seth Cole, aren't you?

SETH: That's right.

GWEN: Are you really? What are you doing here?

SETH: I have a cousin who goes to this school, so I'm visiting today.

GWEN: Oh, I can't believe it. Seth Cole at our school? You're not, like, giving a concert or anything, are you?

SETH: No, nothing like that.

GWEN: Are you—going to be here all day?

SETH: At least for the morning.

GWEN: Oh, that's so amazing. Um—I have a birthday thing I'm doing this morning, but—I hope I'll see you around.

SETH: Birthday, eh? Say, would you like to have lunch with me?

GWEN: Me? Really? Oh—oh—I'd love to. Yes! Oh, I can't believe it. Lunch with Seth Cole?

SETH: What time does your lunch period start?

(Enter Juanita, also in purple.)

JUANITA: There you are, Gwen. C'mon, we have to practice.

GWEN: Oh, Juanita, I'm having lunch with Seth Cole!

JUANITA: Oh, Gwen, that's so cool!

SETH: Gwen?

GWEN: Yes?

SETH: Your name isn't Alice?

GWEN: No, I'm Gwen.

SETH: But you're wearing purple. *(To Juanita:)* Are you Alice?

GWEN: Oh, no. We're wearing purple because it's Alice's birthday. She loves purple.

SETH: Oh. Bonnie told me I'd recognize Alice because she always wears purple.

JUANITA: Bonnie Caldwell?

SETH: That's right. I'm her cousin.

JUANITA: Oh my gosh, you *are* Seth Cole.

SETH: Yes.

GWEN: Bonnie told you Alice would be wearing purple?

SETH: Yes.

GWEN: So basically you asked me out to lunch because you thought I was Alice.

SETH: Bonnie thought it would be a nice surprise for her birthday. Sorry.

GWEN: Oh. Well, I understand.

SETH: I'm still in town tomorrow.

GWEN: Oh, you don't have to.

SETH: It's the least I can do. Gwen, isn't it?

GWEN: That's right.

SETH: I'd love to have lunch with you tomorrow, Gwen.

GWEN: Really? Juanita, Juanita, did you hear that? I'm going to have lunch with Seth Cole.

(The girls both squeal and jump up and down.)

JUANITA: *(To Seth:)* You're supposed to ask Alice out to lunch for her birthday?

SETH: That's right. It was Bonnie's idea.

JUANITA: Come with us. Some of the band members are going to play her a tune and dance the Bunny Hop. We'll show you where her locker is.

GWEN: Alice loves bunnies. We thought it would be way more fun than "Happy Birthday."

(Enter Eric and Fernando.)

ERIC: Any of you seen Lucy or Kira?

GWEN: No.

JUANITA: No; why?

ERIC: They took a camera that Mr. C. entrusted to me. Not going to stand for it. I'll find those two.

(He storms out.)

JUANITA: *(To Fernando:)* A camera?

FERNANDO: We've been using it for our science project on mammals.

GWEN: What do Kira and Lucy want with it?

FERNANDO: It's a surprise for Alice's birthday. They're going to make her think she's on *Middle School Madness*.

GWEN: Oh, my gosh, that's wonderful. Do you think they can fool her?

FERNANDO: Who knows? Lucy says she's got glasses and a wig. But I'd better stay with Eric.

(Exit Fernando.)

JUANITA: You know, Lucy looks a little bit like Vicki Dakota.

GWEN: We have to go see this.

JUANITA: We have to tell Ian and Hal. We'll show up with our bunny ears while she's being interviewed. She'll think we're all on live TV.

GWEN: That's hilarious. And you, too, Seth. You can get down on one knee like you're proposing and ask her to lunch and she'll think everyone in the whole country is watching.

SETH: Hey, I like it. But won't she be embarrassed?

JUANITA: You don't know Alice. She'll love it. Let's go.

(Enter Bonnie in the bunny suit, holding the head under her arm.)

BONNIE: All right, Seth, I'm ready. Have you found Alice yet?

SETH: Not yet. But apparently some friends of hers are doing a fake *Middle School Madness*. Want to be "on TV" in a bunny suit?

BONNIE: You're on.

(Exit Juanita, Gwen, Bonnie, and Seth. Enter Roberta, Penny, and Quinn. Roberta wears a bunny suit but is holding the head under her arm.)

PENNY: A bunny suit?

ROBERTA: Well, it makes perfect sense. No one would recognize them.

QUINN: But why are *you* wearing a bunny suit, Roberta?

ROBERTA: I'm going to find Dariya and sound her out. She'll think I'm Bonnie or Camille.

PENNY: You'll make her spill the beans, right?

ROBERTA: That's right. And if it turns out it was all a mistake, no harm done. But if they're really up to something, I'll go straight to the principal's office.

PENNY: We heard them say —

ROBERTA: I know, you told me. But I just can't believe it. They're such nice girls.

PENNY: And those band members?

ROBERTA: Maybe — maybe they were talking about — about —

QUINN: Blowing something else up?

ROBERTA: I'll find out. Don't do anything rash while I'm gone.

(Exit Roberta.)

QUINN: What did she mean, rash? What doesn't she want us to do, Penny?

PENNY: Oh, she's probably afraid we'll run screaming through the halls shouting "Run for your lives! We're all going to be killed!" or something like that.

QUINN: Eighth graders are so weird.

PENNY: I told you, it's hormones.

QUINN: Will we get them?

PENNY: Hormones? Boy, I sure hope not.

(Exit Penny and Quinn. Enter TROY, URSULA, and VICKI. Vicki Dakota has blonde hair and wears a tight red sweater and very stylish glasses. Troy carries a camera. Ursula is loaded down with various tote bags, a briefcase, and a clipboard, and keeps checking her watch.)

TROY: There's good light here. And it looks like we'll get good traffic.

URSULA: We don't want anyplace too crowded. Is this good, Ms. Dakota?

VICKI: *(Looking around:)* I like that poster, could we get it in the background, Troy?

TROY: We can start with that and zoom out, if you like.

VICKI: Do we know anything about this school?

URSULA: Oh, Ms. Dakota, you know I always research a location before we do a shoot.

VICKI: Please, Ursula, don't fret. Just fill me in.

URSULA: Besides the regularly-scheduled before-school activities, which include Madrigal Singers, Rock Climbing, and Knitting Club, there's currently a chess tournament and an upcoming city-wide music competition.

VICKI: Gosh. With so much to do before school, who will be in the halls?

URSULA: Homework Club meets in the library, and Student Council is sponsoring a canned-food drive.

VICKI: What I meant was, will we find anyone hip to interview?

URSULA: Oh, I'm sure we will. Your audience share is quite high in this region.

VICKI: This spot might do, but let's look around a bit first. And you'll have to touch up my makeup before we go on the air.

URSULA: Oh, of course, Ms. Dakota.

(Exit Ursula, Troy, and Vicki. Enter Dariya with a large bunch of balloons.)

DARIYA: Oh, my gosh. That was Vicki Dakota. We're going to be on *Middle School Madness*.

(Enter Camille.)

CAMILLE: Hi, Dariya.

DARIYA: Camille! I just saw Vicki Dakota. We're going to be on *Middle School Madness*!

CAMILLE: Vicki Dakota? Here? Are you sure?

DARIYA: Yes! She went that way, and she had people with her, and a TV camera, and—oh, my gosh, isn't this great? We have to find Alice. Wouldn't it be the coolest birthday present in the world to be on live TV?

CAMILLE: Live TV? I talked Bonnie into wearing the bunny suit. She'll die if she's on live TV in a bunny suit.

DARIYA: Go find her. Tell her not to. I've got to take these to Alice's locker. Oh, I can't believe it. *Middle School Madness*, here at our school.

(Exit Dariya and Camille in different directions. Enter Owen, Mikayla, and Natalie.)

NATALIE: They're still not in the band room.

OWEN: They obviously suspect something.

NATALIE: But they have to be practicing. I mean, don't they? The competition is next week.

MIKAYLA: Maybe we should split up. Owen, you take the second floor. Natalie, you –

NATALIE: I think we should stick together. It's less like sneaking. If they catch one of us alone, it will look like we're spying.

OWEN: We *are* spying, Natalie.

MIKAYLA: What does it matter how many of us there are? If they catch us, we're dead.

NATALIE: But Mikayla, listen. If it's all three of us, and we're just walking down the hall, and they see us and ask us what we're doing here, we can say we came to wish them luck. Because just one person wouldn't do that. But a group of us, we might, to show there were no hard feelings about last year. Don't you see? It will look less guilty.

OWEN: I don't follow your reasoning.

MIKAYLA: We're not getting anywhere standing here arguing. Let's stick together then, I don't care. But let's keep looking.

OWEN: And listening.

(Exit Owen, Natalie, and Mikayla. Enter Roberta in the bunny suit. Enter Camille.)

CAMILLE: Oh, Bonnie, I'm so glad I found you. You haven't seen Alice yet, have you?

(Roberta shakes her head.)

Don't do what we talked about. We need to call it off.

(Roberta nods her head.)

Go change, quick. I'll explain later. I need to talk to Dariya again.

(Exit Camille. Roberta pulls the head off the bunny suit so her face is visible.)

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