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HELL'S CAFETERIA



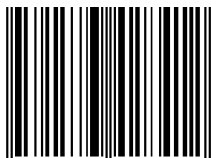
By
Werner Trieschmann

HELL'S CAFETERIA

Comedy. By Werner Trieschmann. *Cast: 2m., 3w., up to 25 with extras, either gender.* Superstar cafeteria chef Rodney "Rotten" Disposle is ready to make life miserable for everybody in another season of "Hell's Cafeteria." Disposle, who's never happy unless somebody is unhappy and isn't really happy even then, hosts the competition to find the best high-school cafeteria manager in the country—by best, Disposle means the worst. If something is edible, Disposle is sure to find out and go on one of his yelling rants. The strange contestants he has in this go-round of "Hell's Cafeteria" are sure to give him fits! There's a clown and a mime who only seem to know how to make cotton candy; a stressed-out hippie couple who just abandoned their restaurant, The Frantic Organic; and a cheerleader and a coach who think every great recipe has Gatorade in it. But when Disposle comes in contact with Mrs. McWilliams, a sweet grandmother who just wants to share her muffin recipe, the game suddenly takes a bizarre turn. Will a winner for "Hell's Cafeteria" be announced? Will anybody make it through lunch? *Bare stage w/ props. Approximate running time: 45 minutes. Code: HF1.*

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Comedy by

WERNER TRIESCHMANN



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Hell's Cafeteria

CHARACTERS

RODNEY "ROTTEN" DISPOSLE (m)

NARRATOR (m or w)

TEENAGER (m or w)

CHUCKLES (m or w): a clown.

MARCEL (m or w): a mime.

HIPPIE MAN (m)

HIPPIE WOMAN (w)

CHEERLEADER (w)

COACH (m or w)

MRS. MCWILLIAMS (w)

STUDENT ZOMBIES / STUDENTS (m or w): four of them.

FIRST STUDENT

SECOND STUDENT

TIME

Lunchtime

PLACE

The Throckmorton High School cafeteria

SETTING

At C is a long table with a variety of kitchen equipment (bowls, industrial mixers, etc.) on it. There might be a cheesy backdrop or signage with flames and the words “Hell’s Cafeteria” on it.

Hell's Cafeteria

AT RISE: *Lights up on the stage occupied by a long table with assorted kitchen equipment at C. There is perhaps a "Hell's Cafeteria" sign in the background.*

A NARRATOR comes out, perhaps wearing protective headgear, and looks nervously into the wings.

NARRATOR (*to audience*). Hey. Um. Welcome to—

(There is a loud commotion offstage. Somebody is banging pots and pans together and yelling about something.)

NARRATOR (*cont'd, to audience, quickly*). Another season of "Hell's Cafeteria."

(Another loud crash and yelling offstage.)

NARRATOR (*cont'd, to audience*). OK. Did everybody sign the insurance waiver? You didn't? Why not?

(NARRATOR points to the audience in front row.)

NARRATOR (*cont'd, to audience*). You really want to sit there?

(NARRATOR looks off to the wings and then dives under a table.)

RODNEY "ROTTEN" DISPOSLE walks out. He's wearing a white chef's jacket and has spikey hair on top of his head. He is also sporting his trademark scowl.)

RODNEY (*to audience*). Right, yeah, don't applaud or anything. It's just the star of the show. That's right, it's me.

Rodney Disposle (*Pronounces it "dis-POS-a-lay," looks under the table.*) Oh look, there's a rat in our kitchen. Come on out. Come on.

(*NARRATOR slowly comes out from under the table.*)

RODNEY (*cont'd*). Well, don't you have something to say to start off this show?

NARRATOR. Don't yell at me. (*Covers up his ears.*)

RODNEY. What's the matter with you? Look, I'm perfectly calm. I am not yelling at you.

(*NARRATOR shrugs his shoulders and gives RODNEY a puzzled look.*)

RODNEY (*cont'd*). I'm not yelling—

NARRATOR (*still covering his ears*). What?! (*Takes his hands off his ears.*)

RODNEY. I AM NOT YELLING AT YOU, YOU IDIOT!

(*NARRATOR looks out to the audience for confirmation.*)

NARRATOR (*to audience*). See?

RODNEY. God, you're soft as pudding. Will you kindly introduce our show so we can proceed?

NARRATOR. I can do that.

RODNEY. What?

NARRATOR. I said I can do that.

RODNEY. It's your job. You ought to be able to do that. That's not what I meant. "I can do that ... what?"

NARRATOR. I can do that ... chef.

RODNEY. Better. OK. So do that.

NARRATOR (*to audience*). Welcome. We are here at Throckmorton High School to begin another season of "Hell's

Cafeteria,” a competition to find America’s next great high school cafeteria chef. As always, our contestants are judged by superstar cafeteria chef Rodney “Rotten” Disposle. (*Pronounces it “disposal,” as in kitchen.*)

RODNEY. No, that’s not right.

NARRATOR. Yes, yes it is, I think. That’s what we’re doing on the show, isn’t it?

RODNEY. No, you donkey. It’s Disposle. (*Pronounces it “dis-POS-a-lay.”*)

NARRATOR. Oh.

RODNEY. Disposle not disposal. I mean, come on!

NARRATOR. Yes, chef.

RODNEY. You ought to know how my name is pronounced. You’re my brother.

NARRATOR (*stricken*). Hey! You don’t have to say that out loud!

RODNEY. Look, can we get this show on the road? Pretty please, donkey?

NARRATOR (*under his breath*). Donkey. I’ll tell *you* who’s the donkey, chef.

(*RODNEY glares at NARRATOR.*)

NARRATOR (*cont’d, to audience*). Each season “Hell’s Cafeteria” returns to find the next great cafeteria chef. And this season will be no different as a new round of contestants finds out if they are wannabes or, ah, you know, non-wannabes, I guess.

RODNEY. Non-wannabes? Really?

NARRATOR. No?

RODNEY. Yeah, I guess you’ve done the bare minimum there to introduce my show. I mean, you could have mumbled something more coherent and compelling in your sleep,

but why worry about putting out any effort there, sport. (*Turns to the audience.*) Donkey there forgot to mention that the winner of this “Hell’s Cafeteria” is given a contract to be the cafeteria chef here at Throckmorton High School. But it won’t be easy.

NARRATOR. You think?

(*RODNEY stares at the NARRATOR.*)

RODNEY. On “Hell’s Cafeteria,” I’m looking for the next cafeteria superstar. Somebody that can stand the heat and stand in the kitchen.

NARRATOR. You have anger issues.

RODNEY. No, I don’t! (*Turns to audience.*) In my show, we’re looking for somebody who can deal with the typical high-school cafeteria customer. (*Looking out to the audience or off to the wings. Pointing.*) C’mere. Yeah, you. When I point at you, I mean you.

(*TEENAGER walks onstage. TEENAGER looks slightly zonked.*)

RODNEY (*cont’d*). OK here we go. You’re a student here at Throckmorton High School, right?

TEENAGER. What?

RODNEY. You eat lunch in this cafeteria, yes?

TEENAGER. Is it time for lunch?

RODNEY. No, it’s not time for lunch!

TEENAGER. Dude, why are you so angry?

RODNEY. I am not angry! Why don’t you get that through your pea-sized skull?

TEENAGER. Seriously, dude, somethin’ like that can really hurt you. You know, medically and stuff.

RODNEY. OK, go back to where you came from.

TEENAGER. So there's no lunch?

RODNEY. Get out!

(TEENAGER walks off.)

RODNEY *(cont'd, to audience)*. Let me tell you it's not easy cooking for donkeys like that. Believe me, I've been in the trenches, and not just the easy dirt and snake-infested trenches, but the cafeteria trenches. I've seen some things people should never see. There was an accident with the industrial mashed potatoes mixer, and on that bloody, awful day, I lost an assistant.

NARRATOR. Wait. Lost? You mean, killed?

RODNEY. Don't be an idiot. No, he got his finger chopped off in the mixer. We searched and searched and couldn't find it. But we still had a complete lunch service that day, and we gave away an extra serving of mashed potatoes to the diner that eventually found the finger.

NARRATOR. Gross.

RODNEY. My point, donkey, is that you have to be really tough to be a high-school cafeteria chef.

NARRATOR. You have to be insane.

RODNEY. That's right! Where are our contestants?

NARRATOR. I need to get away, do something less stressful—work in a nuclear reactor, or in an emergency room or something.

RODNEY. Where are my contestants? Donkey?!

NARRATOR *(looking around for contestants and waving them to the stage)*. Come on. It's time.

(All the "Hell's Cafeteria" contestants come out from various places. Note: if you need to fill out the stage, you can add extras. Some run in and stand at attention, and others walk in with trepidation.)

RODNEY (*to NARRATOR*). This is the sorry lot?

NARRATOR. You haven't even talked to them.

RODNEY (*to contestants*). So you all want to be the next winner of "Hell's Cafeteria," right?

(All give various reactions from "Yes, Chef!" to "I suppose." to "Where's the bathroom?")

RODNEY (*cont'd*). I'm sure you think you are all fantastic chefs, and your mommy loves you, and of course, that is a big, boiling pot of delusion. You don't start out at the top on "Hell's Cafeteria." In fact, you start out on the bottom, the bottom of the pan. Your first challenge is to be bacon.

MARCEL. What?

RODNEY. Bacon. You know what bacon is, right?

MARCEL. Yeah, I know what bacon is but just thought you'd want us to make something hard.

RODNEY. No! Unblock your ears, blockhead. Don't MAKE bacon. You need to BE bacon. So let's go!

(One of the contestants drops to the floor and starts to sizzle like bacon. All the rest follow suit except the HIPPIE MAN and HIPPIE WOMAN. They stand and watch the rest for a moment.)

RODNEY (*cont'd, to the contestants*). You call that bacon? You look like worms on hot rocks! I want to be able to smell you.

(RODNEY now notices the HIPPIE MAN and HIPPIE WOMAN.)

RODNEY (*cont'd, to HIPPIE MAN and HIPPIE WOMAN*). What sort of bacon are you?

HIPPIE WOMAN. We're vegetarians.

RODNEY. So?

HIPPIE MAN. We can't be bacon.

RODNEY. Seriously?

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh, yeah.

HIPPIE MAN. Do you know what bacon is made out of?

RODNEY. Of course I know!

HIPPIE WOMAN. Pigs!

HIPPIE MAN. Hey man, pigs are people, too.

RODNEY. What? All right, that's enough! Stop.

(A couple of contestants continue to pretend to be bacon.)

RODNEY (*cont'd*). I said stop!

(MARCEL, oblivious, continues to be bacon. RODNEY walks over to MARCEL writhing on the floor.)

RODNEY (*cont'd*). I said stop! That was the most pathetic display of bacon I've ever seen. And you want to be cafeteria chefs. I mean, it's ridiculous ... *(Walks off, mumbling and shaking his head as he goes.)*

(All contestants turn to the NARRATOR, who is standing off to one side of the stage and has a cellphone out. NARRATOR looks up and realizes that everybody is staring at him.)

NARRATOR (*sighing*). All right. It's time for the first of our contest profiles on this exciting season of ... *(Stares at the phone while walking off.)* you know, yadda, yadda, yadda.

(CHUCKLES and MARCEL walk onstage and/or are found by a pool of light. CHUCKLES has a horn that he uses to punctuate his lame jokes. While CHUCKLES talks, MARCEL does various mime things, for example walking against the wind, getting out of an invisible box, etc.)

CHUCKLES. So what's cookin' out here? (*Honk.*) My name is Chuckles and this is my friend Marcel. Yes siree O, I'm a clown and he's a mime. We call him the silent partner. The silent partner. Get it? (*Honk.*) Yes siree O, guess I'm already feeling pretty hot out here in Hell's Cafeteria. Oh boy. (*Honk.*) Why are we on "Hell's Cafeteria"? Good question. (*Honk.*) My last job was OK, but everybody was laughing at me. (*Honk.*) Most everybody. (*Honk.*) Also, I was failing at balloon animals. The best I could make is animal intestines.

(CHUCKLES is given by MARCEL, or finds on a table, a bunch of twisted up balloons and shows them to the audience.)

CHUCKLES (*cont'd*). And then Marcel got trapped in an invisible box and couldn't get out.

(MARCEL steps in and closes the lid on an invisible box. He becomes increasingly desperate as he can't find his way out.)

MARCEL. Help! I'm trapped! Help!

(Lights change as RODNEY marches out. The NARRATOR follows behind him.)

RODNEY (*to NARRATOR*). All right, who is this?

NARRATOR (*distracted*). The first contestants on this season of Hell's bladey blah, blah, blah.

RODNEY (*to NARRATOR*). Just pathetic.

(RODNEY turns to CHUCKLES and MARCEL.)

RODNEY (*cont'd*). You know being a cafeteria chef is serious business.

CHUCKLES. We know. (*Honk.*)

(MARCEL makes a serious face.)

RODNEY. I mean it, no funny stuff.

CHUCKLES. Are you saying we should make like a banana and split? (*Honk.*)

(*MARCEL laughs out loud. All turn to him.*)

MARCEL. Make like a banana and split. That's pretty funny. Heh.

RODNEY. Did we break you two out of the asylum just to be on my show? I suppose it's too much to ask if you two bozos—

CHUCKLES. Bozo?! That's my brother. (*Honk.*)

RODNEY. Did either of you make something to eat?

MARCEL. You know, you are really angry.

RODNEY. You're a mime! And you're talking!

CHUCKLES. Yes siree O, Rodney, you are being especially "Rotten" today. (*Honk.*)

RODNEY. You want me to serve you that horn raw, clowny?

CHUCKLES. Uh. No thank you, Rodney sir. (*Honk.*) Sorry. (*Honk.*) That was an accident, swear. (*Honk.*) Maybe there's another clown in here with a horn. (*Honks several times.*) Don't hurt me. (*Honk.*)

RODNEY (*trying to settle down*). Right. Go to your happy place, Chef. Go to your happy place. Let's move forward, what do you say? This is a competition after all. Let's see what you have made for me, all right?

(*RODNEY glares at NARRATOR. NARRATOR walks to a table and brings a tray that he sets down by RODNEY.*)

NARRATOR (*to audience*). Now it's time for Team Funny, Marcel and Chuckles, to show Chef what they have cooked up for "Hell's Cafeteria."

RODNEY (*eating*). What is this?

CHUCKLES. We call it Vegetable Delight.

RODNEY. What? Vegetable Delight? I don't see any vegetables, and this is sweet. It tastes like ...

MARCEL. Cotton candy?

RODNEY. Yeah. What is it?

CHUCKLES. Cotton candy. (*Honk.*)

RODNEY (*to NARRATOR*). OK. Go on.

NARRATOR. Team Funny, it's time pick up your trays.

RODNEY. Team Funny, uh, cotton candy at a high-school cafeteria? Are you kidding me? Team Funny, you're burnt.

MARCEL. He said the catch phrase! "Team Funny, you're burnt." That was great.

RODNEY. Get out.

CHUCKLES. It's been a pleasure working with you.

RODNEY. I didn't work with you.

CHUCKLES. That's why it was a pleasure. (*Honk.*)

(CHUCKLES grabs MARCEL and both walk offstage. RODNEY shakes his head and walks off.)

NARRATOR (*looking around to see the stage is empty*). Oh. Yeah. Now it's time to meet Team Green.

(Lights shift as HIPPIE MAN and HIPPIE WOMAN walk out. They shouldn't immediately register as hippies [dress them in work jeans and maybe flannel], but there's something about them [long hair perhaps] that marks them as hippies.)

HIPPIE WOMAN. We are so happy to be here at Hell's Cafeteria.

HIPPIE MAN. Oh man, yeah.

HIPPIE WOMAN. My name is Matty and this is Jake, my partner in love and life. We used to have a restaurant called The Manic Organic.

HIPPIE MAN. The Manic Organic wasn't like your oppressive corporate chain restaurant. No way, man!

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh no. Our menu was 100% vegan.

HIPPIE MAN. No animal products on the menu.

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh no. That wouldn't be right.

HIPPIE MAN. We didn't have menus either!

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh no. Menus are made out of trees and trees beautify the earth. I lived in a tree once for 3 years. Yes I did.

HIPPIE MAN. That's how we met, man. Yeah. She threw a tree branch at me.

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh yes. Hit him on the head.

HIPPIE MAN. I looked up and there she was. In the tree. I said, "Hey man, you're up in a tree." She wasn't a squirrel.

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh no. I wasn't a squirrel.

(HIPPIE MAN and HIPPIE WOMAN look at each other in amazement.)

HIPPIE WOMAN. Anyway. So The Manic Organic didn't have tables.

HIPPIE MAN. Or chairs! Chairs are oppressive! We weren't gonna force your body into a chair. That's barbaric! *(Points out to the audience.)* You're being oppressed right now, dude. That's right. Think about it.

HIPPIE WOMAN. So The Manic Organic didn't have menus or tables or chairs.

HIPPIE MAN. And we didn't have customers.

HIPPIE WOMAN. Oh yes. They stayed away in droves.

HIPPIE MAN. Most of 'em went to the McDonalds next door.

HIPPIE WOMAN. We didn't have the best location.

(Lights change. NARRATOR stares in disbelief at HIPPIE MAN and HIPPIE WOMAN and then turns out to address the audience.)