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Dramatic Publishing



JUST FOR KICKS

BY

PATRICK M. CLEPPER



THE DRAMATIC PUBLISHING COMPANY

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(JUST FOR KICKS)

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JUST FOR KICKS
A Full-Length Comedy
For Thirteen Men, Thirteen Women and extras*

CHARACTERS

JANET TALBER	}	. . . . .	<i>teachers</i>
MISS CATHER			
PRINCIPAL		. . . . .	<i>principal</i>
CAROLINE ACHESON		. . . . .	<i>principal's secretary</i>
MR. THOMLIN		. . . . .	<i>assistant principal</i>
DIANE	}	. . . . .	<i>students</i>
SUE			
JOSEPHINE	}	. . . . .	<i>reporters</i>
KEN			
BARBARA	}	. . . . .	<i>of "our" football team</i>
TOMMY			
BILL	}	. . . . .	<i>of "their" football team</i>
CHRIS			
SIDNEY		. . . . .
PETE			
DONN			
WILBURSHIRE	}	. . . . .	<i>of "their" football team</i>
BRONCO			
ARLAN			

continued on following page

*Other students, football players, cheerleaders,
faculty members, band members as desired.

KELLY	}	
FRAN		
TERRY		
CATHERINE		..... cheerleaders
BECKY		
MARIANNE	}	
ROY		..... school mascot

TIME: *Present.*

PLACE: *Small town high school.*

NOTES ON CHARACTERS AND COSTUMES

NOTE: In opening scene all students are dressed in casual or work clothes -- jeans, shirts, sweaters, sweatshirts -- and carry pails, dustcloths, brooms, mops and other fix-up, clean-up equipment.

JANET TALBER: English teacher, perhaps in her thirties. Determined, smart -- pressed into service as the coach of a boys' football team in high school. In opening scenes, wears nice dress or suit. Later wears skirt or pants, topped by a football jersey, with visor cap on head, and whistle around her neck.

PRINCIPAL: Male, in his forties or fifties. Pragmatic, usually level-headed, except when he remembers his school's team hasn't won a game and it may cost him his job. Same nice suit throughout the play.

DIANE: All-around good high school student -- but especially proficient in athletics. Tall, personable. Nice dress or suit in first scenes and later in play; also a full football uniform.

TOMMY: The male equivalent of Diane. Fairly good school clothes; also football uniform.

BILL: Good-looking high school student -- fair in sports, below average academically. Casual clothes, and football uniform. In Act Two has a cast on his foot.

SUE: Student -- short -- intellectual. Might wear heavy-rimmed glasses. Nice school clothes.

MR. THOMLIN: Assistant Principal and Head Counselor. Pompous, conceited, rather childish man in his twenties or thirties. A suit throughout.

CAROLINE ACHESON: Principal's secretary. A wry woman in her twenties. Workaday dress.

KEN: A middle-aged sportswriter. Slacks and sports jacket.

BARBARA: Youngish radio sportscaster. Stylishly dressed.

MISS CATHER: English teacher of whatever age desired. Nice dress.

MARIANNE: The student sexpot. Cheerleader outfit.

BECKY: Leader of the cheerleaders.

WILBURSHIRE: Good-natured dummy of the school. Even when he wears regular school clothes, he may also wear his helmet and his football boots. Also, full football uniform.

JOSEPHINE: Band member, in full band uniform. Carries tuba or some other large musical instrument.

"OUR" FOOTBALL TEAM: All at first in casual wear, later in football uniforms. Team consists of: Chris, Donn, Sidney (a bit more intellectual than the rest) Pete and others.

"THEIR" TEAM: All in "enemy" football outfits. Team consists of: Arlan (superstitious, a bit dense), Bronco (as big a player as you can get) and others.

CHEERLEADERS: All wear cheerleading outfits, but also in early scenes, regular casual clothes. Consist of: Kelly, Fran, Terry, Catherine (a very shy, timid girl), Becky and Marianne.

DOGGIE: A dog, naturally, preferably small and carryable. A stuffed animal would be sufficient.

ROY: Squirrel costume. In the last scene he sports a black eye.

PROPERTIES

GENERAL: Two huge banners -- one says: "Go Squirrels!"; the other says: "Wait Till Next Year!" -- in purple and brown colors -- paint faded, paper dusty and grayish yellow with age, corners bent -- signs torn a little in places. High school lockers.
Principal's Office: Large desk, two chairs. Behind desk a large empty case or shelf labeled "Football Trophies." File of papers on desk.
Janet's Office: A desk, two chairs. Bust of Shakespeare and some papers on desk; a letter in desk drawer. Behind desk, a bit of blackboard.

PERSONAL:

SUE: A dustcloth; a big notebook and pencil.
BILL: A football.
DIANE: A few books; pen in her pocket; later on, crutches.
CAROLINE ACHESON: Steno pad and pencil.
PRINCIPAL: A handkerchief.
TOMMY: Many books.
JANET TALBER: A football.
KEN: Press notebook and pencil.
BARBARA: Small tape recorder hanging from a shoulder-strap; microphone.
ROY: Head and mask of squirrel costume.
MARIANNE: Sheets of paper containing a cheer she made up; pair of dirty, dark gray sweat socks.
JOSEPHINE: A tuba or some other band instrument.
ARLAN: Bag containing football gear.
BRONCO: Doggie; bag containing football gear.

TERRY: An autograph book.

THOMLIN: A paper.

DONN: A pie in a box.

ACT ONE

SCENE: The full stage is used as a representation of several sections of a high school. There might be some lockers at back or at sides. On the wall in back are two huge paper banners. Both use the unappetizing school colors: purple and brown. One reads, "Go Squirrels!" The other: "Wait Till Next Year!" The paint is faded; the paper dusty and grayish yellow with age; the corners are bent; in places, the signs are torn. Obviously, they have been up for years. Janet's office is represented DR by a desk and chair, perhaps with a bit of blackboard behind it. There is an extra chair for visitors. On the desk is a small bust of Shakespeare, or some other literary art object. DL is the principal's office, with a chair and a bigger desk, and, perhaps, an extra chair. Behind the desk is a large case or shelf labeled "Football Trophies." It is conspicuously empty. There are no doors or walls for either office.)

AT RISE OF CURTAIN: High schoolers wander around, in and out from the wings, or stand in groups chatting. They are in casual or work clothes, jeans, shirts and sweaters. It is about a month before school opens, and they are there to help get things organized. Instead of books and notebooks, they have dustcloths,

brooms, hammers, pails, and other fix-up and clean-up equipment. Among those present: SUE, KELLY, FRAN, TERRY, CHRIS, SIDNEY and DONN.)

KELLY. Back to the old grind.

FRAN. Where has the summer gone?

SUE. What'd you do?

FRAN. Nothing.

TERRY. Then what difference does it make? You do nothing here, too.

CHRIS. Another month, and back to the books.

DONN. Another two, and I'll be flunking again.

(At about the same time, DIANE and BILL enter L, and TOMMY from R. BILL carries a football, which he nonchalantly tosses in his hands, not too skillfully, while talking to DIANE. TOMMY is a newcomer to the school, and is in better clothes than the others, since he's not there to work. He looks around curiously. He is walking across the stage to L, passing DIANE and BILL. He notices DIANE, stops, turns, and stares.)

TOMMY. Hey, I know you! (DIANE and BILL stop and turn.) You . . . you're Diane Kenwood.

DIANE (puzzled). Why, yes, but . . .

BILL (recognizing him). Tommy Connors!

TOMMY (puzzled as he looks at BILL, then recognition dawning). Bill!

BILL (a bit hurt). You didn't recognize me, and I was your best friend when you used to live here. But you knew Diane right away.

TOMMY. Well, look at her. Wow, what a big girl you are now.

BILL (a little sullen). I was your best friend.

TOMMY. Sorry, Bill. My interests have changed since I was eleven years old. (To DIANE.) My family moved away then, and now we've moved back.

BILL. And you'll be going to school here?

TOMMY. Yes. I just came to look the place over. I know classes don't start for a month or so. I didn't expect to see so many people around.

DIANE. The teachers are getting ready. The kids are here to help . . . get some of the organizations rolling before classes start.

TOMMY. You a cheerleader?

DIANE (a bit affronted). No. I'm in track and tennis . . .

TOMMY (thinking she's through). Oh.

DIANE. . . . and gymnastics and basketball . . .

TOMMY. I see.

DIANE. . . . and swimming and softball.

TOMMY. You through?

DIANE. That's about it -- for sports. In other things . . .

BILL (cutting her off). Diane is in everything.

TOMMY. And why are you here today, Bill?

BILL (incredulous). What?

TOMMY. Which organization?

BILL. You're kidding!

TOMMY. Kidding? No, why should I . . . ?

BILL (his feelings hurt, tossing football up and catching it). You really don't know?

TOMMY. Know what?

DIANE. The football team.

TOMMY. Oh.

BILL (almost bashfully proud). I'm . . . I'm going to be captain! (He tosses up the football and misses it.)

DIANE. Isn't that nice?

TOMMY (retrieving football). Nice. Bill, I don't

remember you being that good. But then, we were eleven years old. (He tosses the ball to BILL, who catches it awkwardly.)

BILL. I've been working at this my entire life.

TOMMY (casually). I play a little football myself. (Looking around.) This place could use a good housecleaning. Like those old, raggedy signs.

BILL. What about 'em?

TOMMY. Well, if I interpret them correctly, they have something to do with sports.

DIANE. Yes, the football team.

TOMMY. The implication is that the football team did not do so well, but that prospects for the future are somewhat rosier.

BILL. Yeah, you could say that. I wouldn't say it that way, but you can.

TOMMY. It appears that the signs have been there for years -- many years -- always promising something better. Someone has been forgetful. Shouldn't that be taken down?

BILL (uneasy). Naw. Maybe dusted a little. (Calling.) Hey, Sue.

SUE. What?

BILL. Get the cobwebs off that, will ya? (To TOMMY.) Boy, you certainly have changed since you were eleven. (Packing the football under his arm.) Come on, Diane.

DIANE (hesitating, as she'd like to talk to TOMMY). Why, I . . .

BILL (grabbing her by the arm). Come on, Diane. (BILL leads DIANE hurriedly off R. SUE moves near the sign. TOMMY goes to introduce himself.)

TOMMY. Hello. I'm Tommy Connors.

SUE (pointing to herself with her thumb). Sue me.

TOMMY. Why do you take orders like that from Bill?

SUE (obviously infatuated with BILL). Oh, well,

see . . . I . . .

TOMMY (getting the message). I see. And what's Diane?

SUE. Too much competition! Those tall chicks.
(She flicks at the dust on the sign with a dust-cloth.) Why are you here today?

TOMMY. I came to see the football coach. I didn't want to say anything while Bill was here, but I'm interested in football.

SUE. Had any experience?

TOMMY. Captain.

SUE. Where?

TOMMY. In the city -- Marshall High.

SUE (impressed). Marshall? That's pretty big.

TOMMY. It has more kids in any one class than there are in this entire high school . . . and your junior high . . . and the elementary school.

SUE. And you were captain?

TOMMY (modest). Well, yeah . . . even when I was a sophomore.

SUE (rolling her eyes to heaven). Oh, boy. Poor Bill. That Marshall team was undefeated . . . champions!

TOMMY. You seem to know a lot about football.

SUE (modest). I read the papers.

TOMMY. You know, Sue, Bill seemed so . . . well, nervous and hurt.

SUE. You mean the way he galloped out of here?

TOMMY. Yes. We were talking about that sign and the football team, and . . .

SUE (the light dawning). Oh, the sign. "Wait Till Next Year." That's why.

TOMMY. I don't understand.

SUE (calling to the other students). Hey, gang. Gather around. (They do. To them:) This is Tommy Connors. (General greetings.)

He's new, see, and he doesn't understand that sign.

FRAN. "Wait Till Next Year."

TERRY. That sign has been up since the school was built.

FRAN. "Wait Till Next Year."

TOMMY. But that implies . . .

SIDNEY. Correct.

SUE. We've never won.

TOMMY. Never won a championship?

KELLY. A championship!

SUE. We haven't won a game.

TOMMY. All last year?

CHRIS. All since the school opened!

SUE. It's a relatively new school . . . compared, for instance, to Harvard.

TOMMY. And that's the team that Bill is captain of. You're not exaggerating a bit?

SUE. Listen . . . the first scrimmage this summer. (As she and the others act it out.) There's a fumble within a stride of the goal.

DONN. There's the ball, loose for anyone to pick up.

SIDNEY. The coach is beside himself, yelling, "Hey, Wilburshire, pick up the ball."

FRAN. "The ball, Wilburshire, pick it up!"

SUE. And Wilburshire turns . . . (She does, putting her hands on her hips, looking put-upon.) "Why me? . . . I didn't drop it."

TOMMY. This Wilburshire . . . he's on the "C" team?

CHRIS. Wilburshire is a senior starter on the "A" team.

TOMMY. I guess I'll go check in with the principal.

FRAN (indicating). His office is over there.

KELLY. I haven't seen him around.

SIDNEY. He's probably in the gym helping the coach send up sacrificial offerings to the gods of the

gridiron.

TERRY. We've tried everything else to get a winning team.

DONN. If only we had a winning team for one game . . .

SIDNEY. Or half a game . . .

KELLY. Or a quarter maybe!

(Except for SUE and TOMMY, they disperse R and L. JANET TALBER, English teacher, enters R.)

JANET. Good morning, Sue.

SUE. Good morning, Miss Talber. Miss Talber, this is Tommy Connors. (To TOMMY.) Miss Talber is our best English teacher.

JANET. Now, Sue . . .

SUE. Her homework can be done during the commercials. (To JANET.) I'm taking the new prisoner to the warden.

JANET. Oh, is he around?

SUE. Yes. He was looking for you.

JANET. He was?

SUE. I suppose it's . . . you know, about your becoming head of the English Department.

JANET (happily flustered). There has been talk of that.

SUE. You deserve it, Miss Talber. (Joking.) Nobody has taught us kids such good, swell English as youse has!

JANET (laughing). Glad to have met you, Tommy. (She starts to go to her office, then remembers.) "Tommy Connors." I recall that name now.

SUE. What is it, Miss Talber?

JANET. Sue, run along -- chase a certain football player and hope that he catches you.

SUE (flustered). Oh, Miss Talber. (SUE exits R

as JANET summons TOMMY to go along with her.)

JANET. Come to my office. (They "enter" her office. She opens the drawer of her desk and picks out a letter.) Tommy, I received a letter from your English teacher at Marshall High. We're old friends from college. When he found out you were coming here, he sent me this evaluation.

TOMMY. What's he say?

JANET. Many good things, and a few not so good.

TOMMY. Why did he . . . ?

JANET. Because he thinks you have a great future as a scholar.

TOMMY. Me? Aw, gosh . . .

JANET. He says you have an excellent chance of getting a good academic scholarship, if you keep your grades up.

TOMMY. Aw, gee . . .

JANET. Here's the bad part. You have a tendency to let academic matters slide, in favor of sports.

TOMMY. Well, golly . . .

JANET (shaking her head). Your conversation doesn't exactly back up what he says about your proficiency in English.

TOMMY. Miss Talber, I appreciate what he has to say about me, and that he took the trouble to write, and your concern and all, but . . .

JANET. But?

TOMMY. I like sports. I do 'em well, especially football.

JANET. However . . .

TOMMY. And I thought I could just as well get an athletic scholarship as an academic one.

JANET. Tommy, I'm aware of the lure of college football. But what about afterward? From a practical standpoint. Prepare yourself for an

intellectual life, and you can teach or write or whatever, anywhere in the world. There are thousands of openings for such a scholar. And it will last the rest of your life.

TOMMY (interested). Yeah?

JANET. On the other hand, suppose you even do well in athletics . . . and that's always chancy.

TOMMY. Why?

JANET. Illness, for instance. Or you break a leg. Where are you then?

TOMMY (thoughtful). Yeah.

JANET. Suppose you do star in college . . . how many opportunities are there to be a pro sports star? There aren't that many good jobs open on the professional teams . . . and thousands and thousands of men try for those jobs.

TOMMY. Yes, but . . .

JANET. There are darn few superstars, Tommy. And their careers don't last long.

TOMMY. But then they can go into business or acting.

JANET. Some can. But the odds are against it.

TOMMY. Still, Miss Talber, I like football. And just the chance, the remote chance, to be where Joe Namath was . . .

JANET. We've examined that lofty chance, Tommy. Now let's get down to earth. What chance do you have of getting an athletic scholarship with this team? They are losers, Tommy. Do you think a university is going to offer you a scholarship -- board, room, and other emoluments -- when you're the big star of the world's losing team?

TOMMY. I hadn't thought about that.

JANET. Think about it.

TOMMY. I guess you're right, Miss Talber. I'd better concentrate on my studies . . . get good grades, get to college that way.

JANET. Great. Forget football, Tommy, forget the team. (She sits at her desk ready to read some papers; dismissingly.) Now go out and play . . . er-r-r, read a poem or an essay or something.

(JANET will continue to sit and read or write until she is called. TOMMY leaves her office, and is looking around when PRINCIPAL enters L in a hurry. Although he is bellowing at no one in particular at first, he frightens TOMMY.)

PRINCIPAL. Where is my secretary? (Calling.)
Miss Acheson! Never around when I need her.
(Calling.) Caroline Acheson!

(TOMMY is trying to hurry out R, when he almost collides with CAROLINE ACHESON, who enters R hurriedly to answer the call, carrying her steno pad and pencil. They do a little "dance" trying to get by each other, then TOMMY exits R.)

CAROLINE. Did you bellow, sir . . . I mean, call?
PRINCIPAL. Why are you never around when I need you? (He leads the way into his office,
CAROLINE trailing.)

CAROLINE. I was in the parking lot, putting up your name-plate over your parking space, as you asked me to. It should last a week before it's desecrated. (PRINCIPAL sits heavily at his desk and sighs.) What's wrong?

PRINCIPAL. The football coach has chickened out.

CAROLINE. What do you mean?

PRINCIPAL. Instead of wanting to coach our football team, he has decided to join an expedition.

CAROLINE. Going where?