



Sample Pages from
Almost History: that whole space time
continuum thing

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**ALMOST HISTORY:
THAT WHOLE
SPACE-TIME
CONTINUUM THING**

A COMEDY IN TWO ACTS BY
Treanor Wooten Baring



Almost History: that whole space-time continuum thing
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Cast of Characters

10-27 + 3-10 Chorus

See Appendix A for specific casting descriptions of major characters.

MEDIA MIKE	Social media television show host
SANDRA	On-air reporter
MELVIN	Science advisor, Sandra's friend
CODY (TEXTING KID 1)	Teenager
JESS (TEXTING KID 2)	Teenager
ASSISTANT PRODUCER	Television professional
PRODUCER	Television professional
LA PINTA NAVIGATOR	Navigator from 1490s
THOMAS JEFFERSON	18 th century writer
BEN FRANKLIN	18 th century scientist
JOHN ADAMS	18 th century patriot
ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL	19 th century inventor
THOMAS WATSON	19 th century assistant to Bell
MICHAEL COLLINS	Astronaut, 1960s
NEIL ARMSTRONG	Astronaut, 1960s
BUZZ ALDRIN	Astronaut, 1960s
COMMAND CONTROL	NASA Engineer, 1960s
PYTHAGORAS	Mathematical genius
EINSTEIN	Mathematical genius
MARIE CURIE	Scientist
MARY SHELLEY	Author
MS. WOOD	Middle school History teacher
MS. SMETEK	Middle school English teacher
HEAD OF IMPERIAL GUARDS	Soviet soldier
FANS 1,2,3	Middle school students
CHORUS (4-7)	Media Mike audience Television crew La Pinta shipmates Congressional congress Imperial guards

All characters can be played by either males or females. Sandra and Melvin's names may be changed if Sandra is played by a male and/or Melvin is played by a female.

Characters in historical scenes can be doubled. The actor who plays Thomas Jefferson, for example, can also play Alexander Graham Bell and Buzz Aldrin.

Set Requirements

Television talk-show set

Television studio with equipment

Shipboard on Columbus's ship

Independence Hall

Alexander Graham Bell's workshop

Apollo Eleven, Command Module and Eagle

Middle school hallway/classroom

Historical scenes are written to take place with a center stage grouping and a second, auxiliary grouping either on a riser or to the side. Historical context may be projected, painted or suggested by backdrops. The "Texting Kids" appear in front of curtain between each scene requiring a set change, one on Stage Left, the other Stage Right.

Notes

Sound effects, music transitions and lighting are standard.

To adapt the play for a high school, replace "middle school" with "high school" and 8th grade history teacher with 9th grade.

The premiere production took place in 2014 at Cornerstone Academy, a Spring Branch Independent School District middle school in Houston, TX.

Act I Scene I

Setting: Television talk show set.

MIKE: Welcome to Media Mike, I'm Mike and I'm going to cover everything on-screen this week, from TV to the latest apps. First, think television is boring compared to games? Hold on to your socks because our channel has something that will literally tear your eyes away from your game console. Let me introduce my first guests. (*applause*) You know her best from her previous hit, *Money Grab*. Let's give it up for Sandra (*enthusiastic applause*) and Melvin, an on-screen newbie, but who we'll be seeing a lot more of from now on. (*a smattering of applause*)

These two are the hosts of a new history program, *America's Got History: Live*, and from the 4-1-1 I'm hearing, this is going to be the most remarkable series ever. Stay tuned to find out why this could be the most shocking show you'll ever see on television. (*turning to SANDRA and MELVIN*) So what's all the buzz about? First, tell us a little about how you came up with the idea for a new show about American history?

SANDRA: Well, way back, like before my parents were born, there was this show on television, when TV only had three channels... (*gasps from audience*) And it was called, *You Are There*. So that was my inspiration to come up with a new series, a time travelogue.

MIKE: I've never even heard of this show.

MELVIN: Walter Cronkite hosted it.

MIKE: Who is Walter Cronkite?

SANDRA: (*outraged*) He was only the most respected journalist in American television history! Or maybe that would be Edward R. Murrow, who came first, and was involved...

MIKE: More famous than me?

MELVIN: Ask your grandparents about Walter Cronkite. They remember all kinds of obscure details like that from the 20th century. Back to what's special about our show...

SANDRA: So on *You Are There* they would re-enact great moments in history with a reporter pretending it was a news program...

MIKE: So you're going to re-enact events from history? I hate to tell you, but that's not exactly new. I've told my viewers, and believe me, I've got the most sophisticated viewers on cable, that your

show is better than Minecraft. It's supposed to be the next big thing!

SANDRA: We're not going to re-enact events. We're going to travel to the past in person! (*the audience gasps, then applauds*)

MIKE: Can you really do that?

MELVIN: Since the original show, scientists have discovered quantum physics, and we've developed a way to take advantage of glitches in the space/time continuum by obfuscating the linear regressional functionality of the...

MIKE: You made that up. There's no such word as obfuscating.

SANDRA: He did make that up, but the thing is, it works! We're really going back in time. We won't just be pretending, we'll actually report from the scene.

MIKE: How does that work? Do you have a time machine? Climb aboard, set the date and off you go?

SANDRA: Our studio is set up with a super-conductor and Melvin here does the calculations with his graphing calculator, and boom, we're transported to the past.

MELVIN: Only it's a little tricky. We can only go back and forth so many times before the glitches get corrected by the quantum effects of the electrokinetic calculations and we lose the non-linear tractable functionality, and accounting for the current galactic calendar shifts, we've got to control the specificity by elapsigating the...

MIKE: Huh? Can you say that again...only in English? And stop making up words!

SANDRA: We've got to go cover the main events of US history in one afternoon, and be back in the studio by three. That's why we're streaming live.

MIKE: Wow, that's going to be one whirlwind history tour! So you're the math and science consultant, (*to SANDRA*) does that make you the history expert?

SANDRA: I didn't do so well in middle school history, but that's only because I wasn't really paying attention. But I've been cramming on the Internet. And obviously I watch a lot of old TV shows.

MIKE: So what's your first stop?

MELVIN: We'll be aboard the Pinta, Santa Maria or the Niña. I haven't exactly worked out the...

MIKE: Christopher Columbus! Back to the beginning of the New World!

MELVIN: That's the idea. I still haven't done all the calculations to figure out what happens once we're there, but I've got a couple of hours.

MIKE: You mean you might not be able to get back to the present?

MELVIN: Not so much that. The unknown is what the variable of our presence would mean for...

MIKE: You mean you could end up changing history? (*Ominous music. All freeze and turn toward the audience with worried looks. After a pause, MIKE smiles broadly and looks excited in a sinister way.*) I told you folks, this is going to be the most shocking premiere ever. Will they or won't they change the entire course of American history? You'll just have to tune in to our network live as it happens. *America's Got History: Live streaming real-time today! (applause)* Good luck, and let us know how the whole space/time continuum thing goes, okay? (*short applause, then MIKE turns to audience*) Meanwhile—can you train your dog to do your homework for you instead of eating it? You guessed it, there's an app for that. I'll review the new PUPPY EINSTEIN app, next. Don't swipe that screen!

LIGHTS FADE and CURTAIN closes.

Act I Scene 2

Setting: Downstage from curtain. Two beanbags or stools, one on each side of stage.

At Rise: Two kids holding smartphones or tablets, texting or video-phoning with each other.

CODY: Hey, did you see Media Mike today?

JESS: Yeah, are you gonna watch that new show about history? It's trending on Twitter. And it's got thousands of Facebook likes already.

CODY: I don't do Facebook anymore. Not since my mom started posting my baby pictures. And sharing everything cute I say. I mean, really, I had to unfriend my own mom! Have you seen the YouTube trailer?

JESS: It's got 200,000 views already. I guess I'll watch the series.

CODY: Might be cool, but don't we get enough history in school? Why would we want to watch more on TV?

JESS: So we can see if the reporters mess anything up and change the whole course of history!

Ominous music. They turn to the audience and look worried. LIGHTS FADE.

Act I Scene 3

Setting: Livestream network studio, in front of curtain.

At Rise: Production meeting, America's Got History: Live. ASSISTANT PRODUCER and PRODUCER are loading equipment, some high tech and some vintage, such as a small digital video recorder, an auxiliary sound recording system, wires, meters and a microphone into a backpack or duffel bag hung over MELVIN's shoulder. SANDRA stands next to MELVIN.

PRODUCER: Digital video recorder?

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: Check.

PRODUCER: Auxiliary audio equipment?

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: Check.

PRODUCER: Background noise reduction microphone?

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: Check.

PRODUCER: Extra batteries?

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: Check.

SANDRA: Shouldn't we be using rechargeable batteries? They're so much more eco-friendly.

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: Well, the adapters are supposed to be good in all countries, but the label didn't say anything about all *centuries*.

MELVIN: What is all this junk? All we need is the new Erdian Spectral Generation-Shrike Class Nebula phone with O.S. Version Three point One Six Eight Two Nine Five. It's got video, audio, slow motion, and an ice cream maker app.

PRODUCER: Not happening. They advertise with a rival network. And besides, Sandra here had some wacky idea about historical accuracy, you know, to honor the original history show, from the fifties.

SANDRA: Some of this is vintage early days of television. Cool, huh?

MELVIN: (*adjusts backpack uncomfortably*) I guess they didn't get the micro in microchip yet, huh. It's getting a little heavy. Are you sure I need all this?

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: The producer wants to make sure you get the best video and audio quality possible, considering.

PRODUCER: (*to MELVIN*) Have you gone over how to use all the equipment? If not, my assistant producer can run you through it again.

MELVIN: I think I've got it. I'm not sure Sandra knows how to work everything... and I've got the most important piece of equipment of all. My graphing calculator!

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: We're getting close to live-stream airtime. You'd better get going.

PRODUCER: Now, you're sure you'll be able to come back to the present? You won't be stuck in some distant century, will you? I'm not sure our insurance covers time travel.

MELVIN: I'm not so much worried about getting back as I am about the effect we'll have on history...

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: T-minus 10-9-8-7-6-5- (*MELVIN enters calculations in calculator*) 4-3-2-1!

LIGHTS BLINK, Time Travel music swells, LIGHTS FADE.

Act I Scene 4

Curtain opens.

Setting: Aboard one of Columbus's ships.

At Rise: SHIPMATES frozen in place on the deck of a medieval ship, curling waves downstage. Sound effects of waves begin gently, then as scene continues, the noise gets louder. On a riser stands a SHIPMATE with a spyglass. SANDRA and MELVIN enter hurriedly, rolling onto the stage as though they've fallen out of

the sky. MELVIN is carrying a heavy duffel bag with recording equipment and graphic calculator.

SANDRA: I hope you did that calculation right, Melvin, or we could be anywhere.

MELVIN: We're on one of Columbus's ships, just not sure which one. Doesn't matter, they all get to the Bahamas eventually.

SANDRA: We need the first sighting of land. It'll be an exclusive. Get me the sailor with the spyglass. Or should we do the navigator first, or maybe the First Lieutenant, or should we say luff-tenant, or what's the word in Spanish, or would it be Italian?...

SHIPMATES come to life.

MELVIN: (*good-naturedly, but firm*) We won't get anybody if we don't get going. Why don't you start with the intro, and keep it simple. Stop arguing with yourself, okay?

SANDRA: Okay, here goes. I'll do it in my Walter Cronkite voice.

MELVIN: Doesn't matter. No-one has seen the original anyway.

SANDRA: Not even on YouTube?

MELVIN gets more impatient. He starts recording with smartphone-type camera, gets a mike out of duffel bag and hands it SANDRA.

MELVIN: Stand by.

MELVIN counts down with fingers from five to one, then points to SANDRA as cue.

SANDRA: (*in serious Walter Cronkite voice*) October 12, 1492. I'm standing here on the deck, the actual deck, of the...the...the... (*looks around, not sure which ship they're on, gestures to MELVIN who shrugs*) ...one of the three ships skippered by Christopher Columbus in the Atlantic, sailing on a course toward destiny, some call it manifest destiny, (*switches to normal, indecisive voice*) or well, that came later on after the continent was settled... (*MELVIN makes hurry up signal by rolling his hand in a circle. SANDRA nods agreement and continues in serious voice.*) ...sailing on a course toward destiny and the (*air quotes*) "discovery" of the New World by the Europeans. (*even more distractedly*) I mean, it's not like the continent was empty or anything, and there's that whole small pox controversy...

NAVIGATOR and 2-3 SHIPMATES enter. NAVIGATOR carries charts and a magnetic compass. The SHIPMATES carry broken up wood. They head to the edge of the ship. SANDRA and MELVIN scurry to get a good view of the action.

SANDRA: (to MELVIN) What are they doing?

MELVIN: Looks like they're getting ready to do a dead reckoning.

SANDRA: Dead Reckoning? You mean they're going to throw someone overboard? We can't let them do that!

MELVIN: They're throwing flotsam overboard.

SANDRA: Flotsam? Which one is he?

MELVIN: (*trying but failing to explain to SANDRA*) It's just dead wood, not a real person.

SANDRA rushes to side of ship by NAVIGATOR and SHIPMATES. MELVIN tries to stop her, but doesn't catch up. NAVIGATOR tosses a piece of wood overboard and SHIPMATES peer over, waving their arms as signals for counting.

NAVIGATOR: (*chanting*) Palmas, Palmitas, Higos y castañitas...

SHIPMATES hold one SHIPMATE up to see overboard. SANDRA, thinking they are trying to push SHIPMATE over, grabs onto them.

SANDRA: Don't worry, Flotsam, I'll save you!

SANDRA wrestles them all back to the deck of the ship. The wood goes everywhere and SHIPMATES scramble to pick it up. SANDRA grabs some wood and swings it around wildly. The SHIPMATES dodge the wood, and in the chaos, all the wood goes overboard. Finally, MELVIN manages to pull SANDRA aside.

MELVIN: They aren't trying to throw anyone overboard! They were holding on to him so he could see the marks on the side of the ship and count how long the wood takes to get from that mark to the other one. It's how they check the ship's speed.

SANDRA: But what about the song they were chanting? That sounded very sinister to me.

MELVIN: It was *Pat-a-cake*, in Spanish! It's a way of marking the time. It's just another way to count. Before stopwatches.

SANDRA: Oh, you mean like singing *Yankee Doodle Dandy* to know how long to wash your hands for? I get it.

MELVIN: I guess.

SHIPMATE #1: All the wood has floated away!

SHIPMATE #2: We have no way to check our speed. This is sabotage!

SHIPMATE #3: (*pointing at SANDRA and MELVIN, then seeing microphone and thinking it's a knife*) They are responsible for this. Look, this one has a weapon! It's piracy!

SANDRA: It is not! We own the rights to this TV show!

MELVIN: No, not making illegal copies of the TV show—he thinks you're trying to take over the ship.

MELVIN steps in front of SANDRA and addresses NAVIGATOR formally.

Excuse me, Señor, we come in the name of King Ferdinand and Queen Isabella...

NAVIGATOR bows, and breaks up the SHIPMATES and SANDRA. SHIPMATES return to duty on another part of the ship. SHIPMATES rock slightly, and as the scene continues, ship rocks more forcefully, as though the seas were getting rougher, shown through the swaying of the SHIPMATES.

NAVIGATOR: Why haven't I seen you before? We haven't been in port for over three weeks.

MELVIN: (*trying to come up with an explanation as NAVIGATOR looks increasingly skeptical*) Uh, we've been below deck, in the galley... making marmalade... I mean, in the captain's quarters, uh, hanging out with the other royal emissarials...no, wait, I know...we were working on top-secret royal episterlary documents, and, um, and, um...

SANDRA: Actually, we were seasick. (*aside to MELVIN*) Keep it simple.

MELVIN: That's right, we were seasick.

NAVIGATOR: (*accepting explanation, nods knowingly*) So do you have a message from the King and Queen? Have they sent more gold?

MELVIN: They said to keep going. Keep on sailing. They'll give you lots of gold later.

SANDRA: And they said to answer all our questions. So you can get credit for your discoveries.

NAVIGATOR straightens up proudly. SANDRA and MELVIN start the equipment recording and resume their television roles.

SANDRA: (*in serious narrator voice*) This is Sandra, live from the deck of the... (*motions to NAVIGATOR to fill in the blank on the name of the ship, but the NAVIGATOR doesn't understand, so SANDRA says ship names really rapidly*) Niña, Pinta or Santa Maria, with the... can you tell us who you are, for the record?

NAVIGATOR: (*proudly*) I am the Navigator.

SANDRA gives thumbs up to MELVIN.

SANDRA: Can you explain the navigation system used to find land across the Atlantic Ocean?

NAVIGATOR: We throw wood off the side of the ship to check our speed, and then use this magnetic compass.

SANDRA: Awesome. Can I see that?

SANDRA grabs compass from NAVIGATOR and brandishes it for the camera.

NAVIGATOR: Only now, because of the, uh, problems, earlier, we've got to use an experimental method — the stars.

SANDRA: Wow! How do you get in touch with them? Have you got their private cell phone numbers?

NAVIGATOR: We see them! When the sky is clear, at night.

SANDRA: Really?! Like who, like Angelina Jolie, have you ever seen her, or Selena Gomez?

SHIPMATES call to NAVIGATOR, who hurries away as waves get rougher and ship is rocking. SANDRA tries to give the compass back, but NAVIGATOR exits.

MELVIN: He's not talking about movie stars! He means the constellations, in the heavens, like the North Star.

Crashing wave sound and everyone on the deck falls over, as if the ship has lurched.

SANDRA: They'd better find land soon, I am getting seasick for real.

MELVIN: I'm a little worried about what happened with the dead reckoning. We're supposed to be observers. Remember to keep a professional distance from the subject or we could end up de-chronomorphisizing...

SANDRA: There's no time to worry about that now! We're about to get the biggest scoop in history. Look!

On the riser, SHIPMATE #4 peers out with a spyglass. Ship continues to rock more violently.

SHIPMATE #4: Land, ho!

SANDRA runs up to SHIPMATE #4 with MELVIN close behind. SHIPMATES keep roiling as if in a storm. Wind noises pick up. SANDRA pulls on SHIPMATE #4's arm. Ship lurches again and the spyglass is knocked from his hand, falling into the waves. SANDRA in a panic also drops compass overboard. MELVIN gets out his graphing calculator. A crack of lightning and clap of thunder, then the stage blacks out for a few seconds. When the lights come back on, the SANDRA and MELVIN are gone, and the SHIPMATES are frozen in place turned toward the audience with horrified looks on their faces. NAVIGATOR is center stage in a panic.

NAVIGATOR: *(in a mix of Spanish and Italian)* Donde esta mia bussola? My compass?!! Where is my compass? Noooooooooo!!

LIGHTS FADE and CURTAIN CLOSES.

Act I Scene 5

Setting: In front of curtain, with bean bag chairs or stools.

At Rise: TEXTING KIDS appear on either side of the stage.

JESS: What'cha think of that?

CODY: It was okay. They didn't even know what ship they were on.

JESS: I've think I've heard of Dead Reckoning before, though. Maybe it was like a punk rock band.

CODY: Yeah, like something my dad listened to when he was young.
Like from the 80s.

JESS: That telescopey thing falling into the water was cool. Do you think Columbus could ever find land after that?

CODY: Hey, yeah, they might have really messed up history after all. Google a map of the world and find out.

JESS: Wow, way cool. Florida's got a completely different name. It's not even part of the United States. We're gonna need a passport to visit Disney World. No, wait, Disney World is not even there anymore!

CODY: Hey, I just did a search on Columbus Day and came up with zippo, nada! They wiped out a whole day off school!

JESS: This could get serious. We'd better keep watching.

CODY: Where are they going next?

JESS: Says Philadelphia. Uh-oh.

CODY: What?

JESS: 1776. Continental Congress. Independence Hall.

CODY: That's where the Declaration of Independence was adopted; it's the birthplace of our nation.

JESS: But they couldn't mess that up, could they? I mean, not even these two...

LIGHTS FADE.

Act I Scene 6

Setting: Independence Hall, Philadelphia, 1776. Signing of the Declaration of Independence.

At Rise: The Founding Fathers are gathered around a long scroll document, quill pen poised in hand, a large inkwell on the table in front of them. All are frozen in place. Spotlight is on THOMAS JEFFERSON, BEN FRANKLIN and JOHN ADAMS. SANDRA and MELVIN enter.

SANDRA: *(holding microphone, speaking in Cronkite voice)* July 4, 1776. We're here in Independence Hall, Philadelphia to witness one of the most important events in U.S. history. These colonial leaders

are about to sign a document declaring that they are no longer subjects of the King of England, but free citizens. (*switches to normal, indecisive voice*) Well, not everybody has equal rights yet, slavery wasn't abolished, and have they figured out about the three branches of government yet? And I read something about how smaller colonies, like Rhode Island, are going to object to proportional representation, and isn't it another hundred and forty-four years before women get the vote...

As SANDRA speaks, the scene behind them comes to life. THOMAS JEFFERSON lifts quill and dips it in inkwell.

MELVIN: (*poking SANDRA*) Excuse me, we're about to miss it. This is the cradle of liberty. We can cover those other events next season.

SANDRA: Right. (*SANDRA approaches signing table and sticks microphone at signers*) Now which one of you wrote this document? Thomas Jefferson, right? Which one is TJ?

THOMAS JEFFERSON gestures proudly.

MELVIN: (*pointing to BENJAMIN FRANKLIN and JOHN ADAMS*) Well, I think Ben Franklin and John Adams helped write it, too. There was a committee.

THOMAS JEFFERSON, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN and JOHN ADAMS all begin to talk at once, arguing.

JOHN ADAMS: I had the idea that happiness of society is the goal of government, and that the best form of government is a republic...

THOMAS JEFFERSON: I'm generally known as the best writer in the group, there's no denying that...

BENJAMIN FRANKLIN: As the oldest member, and the one with the most scientific mind, and...

SANDRA: (*loudly interrupting*) Hold on, I thought you guys were united?

THOMAS JEFFERSON, BENJAMIN FRANKLIN and JOHN ADAMS look at him confused, then go back to squabbling.

JOHN ADAMS: (*pointing to THOMAS JEFFERSON*) Well, he's always trying to take credit, just because he wrote all the flowery stuff.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: Somebody had to write it out and not go on and on, you know you love to hear yourself speak...

JOHN ADAMS: Me? You have a lot of nerve. All your talk about liberty, but what's really going on down there in Monti—sello, or whatever you call it?

THOMAS JEFFERSON and JOHN ADAMS almost come to blows.

MELVIN: I think we should get on with it. We have to be back in the studio at three, and we've got a lot of history to cover. Where is John Hancock? Doesn't he sign first?

They all look around but don't see John Hancock.

BEN FRANKLIN: (*taking up quill pen*) I'm the oldest, I'll sign first.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: (*grabbing pen*) I'm the richest, I get to sign first. And I'm from Virginia. It's the most important colony.

JOHN ADAMS: Oh, no you don't. I'm from Boston. We had the first Thanksgiving.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: That's a myth. Jamestown was settled before Plymouth. I get to sign it first. (*they struggle over the pen*) Me, me, give it to me.

JOHN ADAMS: I'm in charge. I'm in charge!

BEN FRANKLIN: I see I'm the only grown-up. Hand it here, I say!

SANDRA: (*to MELVIN*) I think I figured out why John Hancock had to put his name at the top. (*steps in to break up fight*) Come on guys, you have to wait for John Hancock!

SANDRA tries to grab the pen from them and split them up, but knocks over the inkwell all over the parchment. Everyone gasps loudly. THOMAS JEFFERSON stands up, in shock.

THOMAS JEFFERSON: You've ruined it! All my beautiful phrases...

JOHN ADAMS: Well, just get out the other copies. We'll vote on it and then sign it... (*THOMAS JEFFERSON looks sheepish*) You did make more copies, didn't you?

THOMAS JEFFERSON: (*whining*) I was going to get to that later. It takes several days to write all it out in that scrolly handwriting. My fingers got cramped. My thumb hurts.

SANDRA: You must have saved a copy to the cloud?

MELVIN: This is before the cloud. It's 1776 after all.

SANDRA: Well, what about your hard drive? Or a stick?

BEN FRANKLIN: What are you talking about, driving a stick on a cloud? Are you out of your minds?

MELVIN: (to SANDRA) I told you, this is before the cloud. He thinks a cloud is a visible collection of water particles suspended in the atmosphere, you know, like in the sky.

SANDRA: You mean they're even more out of date than our parents? (crowd noises from offstage) What's that?

BEN FRANKLIN: It's The People! They're expecting us to bring out the Declaration. They want to celebrate, and get on with the revolution! What are we going to do?

MELVIN: I think we'd better get out of here, Sandra. You know what James Madison said about mob rule.

SANDRA: No, what?

MELVIN: Never mind. That's for Season 2. Let's get to the next event!

The crowd gets louder. The Founding Fathers scramble around calling for John Hancock.

FOUNDING FATHERS: John Hancock? Mr. Hancock? Where are you?

MELVIN and SANDRA run offstage. LIGHTS FADE and CURTAIN CLOSES

Act I Scene 7

Setting: In front of curtain.

At Rise: TEXTING KIDS on either side of stage.

JESS: (sarcastically) That went well.

CODY: (disappointed) Look, Wikipedia says the Declaration wasn't actually signed until sometime in August anyway. So they probably didn't really mess up that much.

JESS: That's too bad. I was hoping to get out of the Facts Test on the Revolution next Monday.

CODY: And we're not talking in English accents, so it must all be okay, right?

JESS: Unless there's some kind of like delayed effect, or something. I'm a little confused about the whole space/time continuum thing.

Ominous music plays. They freeze with worried looks, then snap out of it.

CODY: Can you imagine having to actually write out something with a pen and paper? What's up with that?

JESS: And the printer ink was in a *round* bottle, did you see that?

CODY: And why did a crowd have to wait outside to find out if they signed it? They could have tweeted the news: "Declaration of Independence signed. Kicking British out now."

JESS: Then a "read more" link to the National Archives website. Think of all those trees. And that reporter, kinda clumsy.

CODY: I can't wait to see what they manage to mess up next. We might be able to get out of a whole bunch of tests. Where are they going next?

JESS: March 10, 1876, Boston, Massachusetts. 100 years later. What's that about?

CODY: No clue. Guess we'll have to wait and see.

JESS: Hey, it's back on. T-T-Y-L.

LIGHTS FADE.

Act I Scene 8

Curtains open.

Setting: The workshop of ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL, 1876.

At Rise: ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL sits atop a riser and center stage at a table, sits THOMAS WATSON. Crude early telephone made out of a funnel, a cup of "acid" and some copper wire is on the riser and table. The two are frozen in place as SANDRA and MELVIN enter. MELVIN carries a duffel bag and extra meters, phones and props, and looks out of breath.

MELVIN: Hey, why do I have to carry all the gear? Why don't you help out?

SANDRA: I'm the on-air talent. That's the way it works in television. I'm the face and the voice, and you do all the work.

MELVIN looks annoyed and drops the duffel bag and the extra gear on the ground.

MELVIN: Forget it. This dashing around is getting old, not to mention trying to keep you focused. (*MELVIN takes out graphing calculator and begins to punch in calculations*) I'm leaving. You can find your own way back to the 21st century.

SANDRA: Okay, okay. I'll carry something. Let me operate the auxiliary sound recorder. (*SANDRA picks up recording device and plays with knobs. Sound effects of loud squeals.*) How does this thingy work anyway?

MELVIN: (*sits down on stage, takes out wires and bottles from the backpack and begins rigging them together*) You'll figure it out. I'm busy. We ran out of batteries.

SANDRA: I told you to bring rechargeable ones.

MELVIN: We're in the 19th century; no wall plugs. But don't worry, I'm using Bernoulli's Theorem to rig an electro-magnetized cell using oxygenatable conductivity...

SANDRA: Are you making up words again? Oh, well, if it works, why not? I've got to write the intro. Remind me, why we are here?

MELVIN: (*finishing the work and standing up*) Alexander Graham Bell. He's about to invent the telephone. See, it's got copper wire, acid and a funnel.

BELL and WATSON come to life behind them, tinkering and muttering.

SANDRA: Oh, right. Okay, cue me in. (*MELVIN does finger countdown and cues SANDRA who begins introduction in Cronkite whisper*) March 10, 1876, Boston, Massachusetts. The workshop of Alexander Graham Bell. And what we are about to see and hear is an invention that would change the world forever, and it all took place right here, close to where I'm standing now. (*switches to normal, indecisive voice*) Or at least that's the official story, and we're going to stick with it. There are some people who say Elisha Gray really developed the first workable...

MELVIN: You're doing it again! Can you please just get through one introduction?! Come on, let's move on. We don't want to miss the big moment when Graham spills the acid and calls for Watson and he hears him over the wire.

SANDRA moves over to WATSON with mic and sound system in hand. Sound effects of squealing. SANDRA makes adjustments and sticks mic at WATSON.

THOMAS WATSON: Can I help you? I'm in the middle of something here...

Up on the riser, BELL is working away on the telephone device.

SANDRA: We're here from the future to interview you as you make one of the most important discoveries in the history of the United States.

THOMAS WATSON: Are you lunatics? Who let you in?

MELVIN: (*stepping up to intervene*) We're here from the new daily newspaper, the Boston Globe.

WATSON nods and waves at them to continue.

SANDRA: Tell us your name and what you are working on, if you please. How is this new machine going to work exactly? (*winks at MELVIN*)

THOMAS WATSON: I'm Thomas Watson, and my friend Alexander Graham Bell is in the other room.

The sound machine begins to squawk again, nearly drowning him out. He raises his voice and continues. During this, on the riser, BELL spills the acid and calls out, but WATSON can't hear him over the squealing of the SANDRA's sound machine and continues. MELVIN gestures to SANDRA to cut off the machine, pointing to BELL. WATSON continues, oblivious to BELL. The squealing continues.

We're working on what's called a harmonic telegraph, which will transmit sounds electrically by creating a membrane capable of varying electronic currents, thereby reproducing these variations in audible frequencies.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL: Watson, come here, I need you!

AGM's call is audible over wires, but WATSON does not hear it. MELVIN points frantically to the "telephone" and tries to get WATSON's attention, but fails. MELVIN finally manages to get SANDRA's attention, who turns off the sound machine, but it's

too late. BELL emerges from his “room” and speaks to WATSON.

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL: Didn't you hear me, Watson? I called you!

THOMAS WATSON: Uh, no. Sorry. I guess the device didn't work.

MELVIN pulls on SANDRA's sleeve, pointing to telephone.

MELVIN: (*frantically*) Mr. Bell, try again. It worked! You say, “Mr. Watson, I need you,” and he hears you over the wire...

ALEXANDER GRAHAM BELL: (*suspiciously*) Who are these people? How did they get in here? They could be spies. Look, he's copying something in... in some sort of machine... He's stealing our invention!

SANDRA: Hurry, write the equation to get us out of here!

MELVIN works on calculator. WATSON and BELL go to grab the equipment. There's a scramble. They knock over the device on the table and LIGHTS FADE, CURTAIN CLOSES.

SANDRA and MELVIN appear in front of closed curtain.

SANDRA: Whew, that was close. They almost got ahold of our digital gear. That could have really thrown a wrench into the workings of history.

MELVIN: I think we did enough damage as it is.

SANDRA: Do you think they'll figure it out? I would hate to be responsible for...

MELVIN: We can go back again, to before we got there the first time, and I'll work the sound machine.

SANDRA: That's a good idea. I can redo my introduction. Leave out the part about Elisha Gray. I could use a do-over.

MELVIN: Wait! I made a mistake in my calculations. Something is terribly wrong...it's booting us to the next event...July 20, 1969...it's out of my control...we're going to the Moon!!!

They whirl offstage to dramatic sound effects and music. LIGHTS FADE.

Act I Scene 9

Setting: In front of curtain.

At Rise: TEXTING KIDS appear, still at opposite sides of the stage.

CODY: *(typing on smartphone, shaking it)* Hey, why is my phone dead? I just charged it...

JESS: Yo, Cody, are you there? Earth to Cody, come in...what, no service? What is going on?

Dying electronics sound effect. CODY and JESS look up, stricken.

CODY & JESS: O-M-G!!

LIGHTS FADE. END OF ACT ONE.

Act II Scene I

Setting: Aboard Apollo Eleven, 1969.

At Rise: SANDRA, MELVIN and MICHAEL COLLINS are all cramped in the Apollo Eleven capsule, orbiting above the Moon. BUZZ ALDRIN and NEIL ARMSTRONG are in the Lunar Module, the Eagle.

SANDRA: Hey, we're actually in a spaceship. I can't believe it! This is phenomenal. Look out that window—I can see the Moon! You're a genius! We'll be renewed for another season!

MELVIN: *(in a whisper)* Shhh. This is our last chance to make up for all those other goof-ups. We've got to get this one right. I think we're on the Columbia.

SANDRA: *(continuing in a whisper, worried)* The space shuttle?

MELVIN: No, this is 1969. Apollo Eleven. The command module. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin are on the Lunar Module. Looks like they're about to separate and head down to the lunar surface.

COMMAND CONTROL: *(voiceover)* Apollo Eleven, this is Houston. How do you read?

MICHAEL COLLINS: Reading you loud and clear, Houston. Stand by for descent.

NEIL ARMSTRONG: Houston, Commander Armstrong here. Apollo Eleven is getting its first view of the landing approach. It looks very much like the pictures, but like the difference between watching a real football game and watching it on TV. There's no substitute for actually being here.

BUZZ ALDRIN: We're going over Mount Marilyn at the present time. Preparing for ignition point.

SANDRA: *(in Cronkite voice)* July 20, 1969. We are here with the astronauts of Apollo Eleven, well, actually only one, the others are in another capsule, and...anyway...we're about to witness, close up and personal, the landing of the Eagle on the Moon itself, like it's never been seen before...

MICHAEL COLLINS hears SANDRA and turns, flabbergasted to see someone on his spacecraft. He backs up against controls in horror.

MICHAEL COLLINS: AHHH!!! Who are you? How did you get here?

SANDRA: You aren't going to believe this, but, your heroics have paid off for future generations, and now, we've got a whole boatload of technology you've never dreamed of, because of what you did, like iPhones and Androids, and live streaming, which is actually what we're doing now, on broadcast and over the Internet...

MELVIN excitedly shows MICHAEL COLLINS his graphing calculator, MICHAEL COLLINS recoils.

MICHAEL COLLINS: (distressed) Houston, I'm hallucinating! Check... oxygen...levels...

MICHAEL COLLINS passes out.

COMMAND CONTROL: Columbia do you read? Oxygen levels normal. You're heading to L-O-S in about five. Do you read?

SANDRA: What's L-O-S?

MELVIN: It's when they pass to the dark side of the moon and can't transmit to Earth.

NEIL ARMSTRONG: Say, what's going on in there, Mike?

MELVIN: That's Neil Armstrong! We've got to answer him. He's got to make the lunar landing.

SANDRA: Try to wake him up. I'll pretend to be him. What was his name?

MELVIN: Michael Collins. Nobody ever remembers him. Neil Armstrong and Buzz Aldrin landed on the moon while he stayed behind in orbit.

SANDRA shoves MICHAEL COLLINS aside and assumes his position.

SANDRA: This is Mike Collins, Columbia speaking. Everything A-OK up here, guys. How's it down there in Houston? Got any baseball scores for us? How about those Astros! And what's happening around the rest of the *National League*?

COMMAND CONTROL: Um, Mike, you sound weird. We'll do another check on your oxygen levels, stand by...

Static on voiceover and then goes quiet.

MELVIN: This must have been before the Astros had to add moral victories to their win column.

SANDRA: Look, we're around the opposite side of the moon from Earth now. We've lost contact with Command Control in Houston.

BUZZ ALDRIN: This is Pilot Buzz Aldrin. Mike, could you give us those burn co-ordinates again for the landing?

SANDRA and MELVIN look at each other, silently scream and throw hands up in the air in a panic.

SANDRA: What do I do now? Quick, take a look. You're the science consultant, figure something out!

MELVIN: *(looking over equipment)* These controls are completely different from anything I've ever seen. It's not even touch screen. Where do you swipe your finger? And look, the whole system's got 36K memory. My graphing calculator has more than that...

NEIL ARMSTRONG: Columbia, do you read? What's going on in there, Mike?

SANDRA: Just push something! Anything!

MELVIN begins to click buttons. The spacecraft jolts. MICHAEL COLLINS begins to wake up.

Quick, beam us back to the present, or however you do it, before he sees us and passes out again!

MELVIN punches numbers into graphing calculator. Spacecraft rolls out of control. Sound effects of weird space noises. LIGHTS FADE and CURTAIN CLOSES.

Act II Scene 2

Setting: In front of the curtain.

At Rise: TEXTING KIDS appear together, on the same side of the stage.

CODY: Nothing is working, not my phone, my laptop, my email, everything's gone blank. No texting, even! I can't believe I had to walk all the way over to your house just to talk to you *in person!*

JESS: It's only next door.

CODY: What are we going to do now?

JESS: This is awful!

LIGHTS FADE.

Act II Scene 3

Curtains open.

Setting: TV Studio Interior. Backdrop of talk show set is written in Russian. Everything in the studio is topsy-turvy.

At Rise: Chaotic scene of television crews, all in black, running around, trying to get cameras and other equipment to work. SANDRA and MELVIN land in scene, as before, rolling in.

MELVIN: Whew, we're back. For a minute there I wasn't sure about that last calculation.

SANDRA: You weren't sure!!!!

MELVIN: Well, there is some variability in the electrokinetic trajectorambulus...

SANDRA: No! Stop! No more made up words! My brain can't take it!

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: (*approaching them*) Gooran dink, Sandra, Melvin. Fleegal mis beacherdun? Lrk lackle mo roossley verthoff?

MELVIN: And you think I make up too many words?

SANDRA: She/He was perfectly normal when we left. Or, well, as normal as anyone who works in television gets.

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: (*growing frustrated at them not answering*) Abscam dee morflibber? Ginnyhoo frest nalchal pi gandobleem. Simstow jamstow ar fee oberwock sinnaboramildum li fallokin?

PRODUCER takes ASSISTANT PRODUCER by the arm.

PRODUCER: She/He's from Florida. Ever since you guys went on your whole little space/time continuum thing adventure, everybody from Florida speaks some foreign language, like Viking or something!

ASSISTANT PRODUCER: (*growing more agitated and wild*) Dunnock widshafter cozzle! Lesh ibber! Funtobbie gren! Paff, paff! Esto manee-orble!

PRODUCER: (*patiently leading ASSISTANT PRODUCER to join rest of crew*) There, there. We'll get it all sorted out soon.

MELVIN: (*aside*) The spyglass accident on the Pinta! or the Niña, or was it the Santa Maria? They got lost in the storm. Someone besides Columbus must have discovered the New World, and it changed everything!

PRODUCER: (*returns to MELVIN and SANDRA*) And none of the telephones work.

SANDRA: (*aside*) Um, that would be the little mishap with Alexander Graham Bell.

PRODUCER: And all the electronics instructions are written in Russian! All the letters are backwards!

SANDRA: (*to MELVIN*) You told me you made sure the astronauts got back to Earth safely.

MELVIN: They did. But they didn't complete the Moon landing. Which means the Russians gained the upper hand. They were our enemy back then, during the Cold War. There was a space race!

SANDRA: Didn't we win that?

MELVIN: That was before we went back in time...I thought there might be a problem with the whole space/time continuum thing!

SANDRA: Oops. (*Behind them the IMPERIAL GUARDS, in Cossack-like uniforms, come in and arrest the TELEVISION CREW MEMBERS. A tussle ensues.*) What's going on?

HEAD OF IMPERIAL GUARDS: Arrest them all!

PRODUCER: Those are the Imperial Guards. They're here to arrest my crew—there is no Constitution, no Bill of Rights, no Freedom of Speech because there was no American Revolution. Everything is a disaster! What did you guys get up to back in time anyway?

SANDRA: You mean my own producer didn't even watch the live stream?

PRODUCER: Never mind that, what are we going to do now?

SANDRA: (*to MELVIN*) You're the science consultant, you must have a plan.

Mayhem behind them grows more chaotic. MELVIN works the calculator in a panic, IMPERIAL GUARDS march off with captive CREW.

MELVIN: There's only one more glitch left in the whole space/time continuum thing. That's not enough to fix all the mistakes.

SANDRA: You're joking? I can't live without my cell phone. You've got to think of *something*.

MELVIN: (*still working on his graphing calculator*) Hold it! It looks like we can bring people forward, from the past to our time. I've always wondered what some of the greatest minds in history would think of our world.

PRODUCER: That's it! We can gather the some Great Minds of All Time of all time to come up with a solution. Quick, do the calculations. I'll go get my crew out of free speech detention.

LIGHTS FADE and CURTAIN CLOSES.

Act II Scene 4

Setting: In front of curtain.

At Rise: TEXTING KIDS sit together SL with a chess set between them. They make several moves, contemplating the pieces.

JESS: This is cool. You can actually touch the pieces. I mean, they're like three-dimensional. I can hold one up over a square while I decide.

CODY: And move them around, with your hands, instead of the mouse. But it's actually kinda hard because the computer doesn't tell you if you're about to get taken by the queen or anything. You have to figure it out for yourself.

JESS: I sort of like it anyway. (*looks at all sides of the chess board*) Where's the save button so we can keep playing later?

CODY: Take a photo of the board... Oh, no. We'll have to remember where the pieces were, or...write it down on a piece of paper!

JESS: What should we do next? You wanna play cards?

CODY: Or maybe we could...go...outside...

They both turn to audience with shocked and pleased expressions. LIGHTS FADE.

Act II Scene 5

Curtains open.

Setting: TV Studio Interior, still topsy-turvy.

At Rise: EINSTEIN, MARIE CURIE, PYTHAGORAS and MARY SHELLEY are seated at a table in the center of the studio. EINSTEIN and PYTHAGORAS scribble on a whiteboard on an easel, MARIE CURIE is mixing colored liquids in a chemistry set, and MARY SHELLEY has books and notebooks piled in front of her. MELVIN sits at head of the table while PRODUCER and SANDRA pace around.

PRODUCER: (*craning over MELVIN's shoulder*) Is this all you could bring forward? *Four of the Greatest Minds of History?*

MELVIN: Shakespeare was nowhere to be found. Leonardo Da Vinci was too busy writing backwards. Benjamin Franklin is still not speaking to us after the Declaration of Independence fail. I had to promise triple-shot hazelnut vanilla cinnamon caramel latte macchiatos just to get these four to come to the future at all.

SANDRA: Don't tell me they are no drive-through coffee places back where they come from. How did they get anything done?

PRODUCER: Okay, okay. We're lucky we got anybody at this late notice. Who are these people anyway?

SANDRA: Maybe we should go around the table and introduce ourselves, get to know each other, like say your name, your hobbies, that kind of thing, so we can bond as a team.

MELVIN: This isn't a middle school peer group session! We're trying to save our country, and the world, from a history re-write. These are four of the world's most influential geniuses of all time.

PRODUCER: At least tell us who they are.

MELVIN gestures toward EINSTEIN to begin.

EINSTEIN: (*thickly accented, in a proud voice*) I'm Albert Einstein, greatest scientific thinker of all time. My theories of relativity led to the development of modern physics.

MARIE CURIE: (*in a French/Polish accent, competitively*) I'm Marie Curie. I have two Nobel Prizes, one in Physics and one in Chemistry. My most famous discovery was radioactivity.

SANDRA: Cool, AM or FM?

MELVIN: No, radioactivity, like radium, x-rays, uranium. Never mind, next.

PYTHAGORAS: (*not to be outdone by the other scientists*) I'm Pythagoras, a mathematician and astronomer from ancient Greece. I have a theorem named after me.

MARY SHELLEY: (*rolling her eyes at the others*) I'm Mary Shelley, born in 1797. I'm an author.

SANDRA: Wait, I know who you are. You wrote Frankenstein! You created a monster that's a metaphor for technology out of control. Good choice, Melvin.

MELVIN: You all know why we're here; I've given you the background. We've got to find a way to undo all the errors we created by interfering with history. Any ideas?

GREAT MINDS begin scribbling on notebooks. PYTHAGORAS and EINSTEIN write complicated mathematical formulas on the white board.

PRODUCER: Well, what do you think? Do you have a solution?

EINSTEIN: Give us a minute. We're working on it. No problem can be solved from the same level of consciousness that created it.

TELEVISION CREW MEMBER enters with takeout tray of venti coffees and passes them around. GREAT MINDS all fumble with sugar packets, examining them curiously, tearing into them, sending sugar flying, trying to figure out how to get lids off take out cups, playing with the cup sleeves, which they also send flying across the room. PYTHAGORAS and EINSTEIN get into a sword fight with the wooden stirring sticks. MARIE CURIE pours hers into her chemistry set to analyze it.

PRODUCER: That much caffeine and sugar ought to raise their level of consciousness all right. How much did that set us back?

TELEVISION CREW MEMBER: (*handing PRODUCER the receipt*) Eighty-two dollars and seventy five cents.

PRODUCER: (*to SANDRA, handing her the receipt*) That's coming out your show's budget, you know.

GREAT MINDS settle down, drink coffee happily and confer in low voices. Finally, they all nod and MARIE CURIE stands up to make an announcement.

MARIE CURIE: After careful consideration, and calculations based on the facts before us... (*GREAT MINDS murmur in agreement*) We've come to the conclusion...

SANDRA, MELVIN & PRODUCER: Yes? Tell us! What's the answer?

PYTHAGORAS: We've come to the conclusion...

ALL GREAT MINDS: ...It can't be done.

SANDRA, MELVIN and PRODUCER groan in disappointment.

MELVIN: But you're all geniuses. You can't give up that easily!

EINSTEIN: The difference between stupidity and genius is that genius has its limits!

MELVIN: Hey, that's my favorite Einstein quote. I never thought I'd actually get to hear him say it in person.

PRODUCER: What are we going to do now?

TELEVISION CREW MEMBER approaches.

TELEVISION CREW MEMBER: Excuse me, but there's someone here to see Sandra. She says she's her 8th grade history teacher, Ms. Wood. She says it's urgent.

PRODUCER: Show her in!

MS. WOOD enters. SANDRA hides behind MELVIN.

MS. WOOD: Reporter, where are you?

MELVIN steps aside and pushes SANDRA toward MS. WOOD.

SANDRA: (*sheepishly*) Hi, Ms. Wood. It's good to see you.

MS. WOOD: You haven't changed at all since middle school! I heard about your problem, how you totally messed up the whole space/time continuum thing.

SANDRA: You mean you didn't come to remind me to turn in my Election of 1864 project?

PRODUCER: (*to MS. WOOD*) How did you know Reporter was responsible for all the problems?

MS. WOOD: All my students are streaming the show, live. I'm having trouble getting them to concentrate in class. And I thought, who does this remind me of?

SANDRA: (*guiltily, making excuses*) I can explain why I didn't make it to the end of the underground railway. I got mixed up about which room was supposed to be Philadelphia, and how to get to Canada. And then boy playing Frederick Douglass was so cute (*or 'the girl who was playing Harriet Tubman' if the reporter is a boy*), that I got really distracted.

MS. WOOD: Exactly. You weren't paying attention to the lesson. When people don't learn history, they end up repeating it.

GREAT MINDS, who have been quietly listening, perk up, straining to hear.

PYTHAGORAS: What did she say?

MARIE CURIE: She said history repeats itself.

PYTHAGORAS: What was that again?

MARY SHELLEY: (*in a louder voice*) History repeats itself!

PYTHAGORAS: History repeats itself?

MARY SHELLEY & MARIE CURIE: (*shouting*) Yes, History repeats itself.

EINSTEIN: All right, we heard you the first time.

MS. WOOD: So, I think I've got a solution that will fix everything.

ALL: What? Tell us!

MS. WOOD: Sandra here wasn't paying attention in 8th grade history class, so when they went back in time, she got confused, and, well, we know things went wrong from there. So, if she comes back to my 8th grade class, but this time actually learns something, they won't make mistakes when they go back to the past.

MELVIN: That's it! Sandra goes back to 8th grade, which is before we went back in history, then that changes the sequence when we went back in time to the future of the present time when she goes back to 8th grade and so the past will be the future and all the mistakes we made in the past will be obliterated... (*SANDRA and PRODUCER look at MELVIN sternly*) I mean, wiped out, in the

future, which is really the past, and the present future will be repaired.

SANDRA: I think I actually understood that. Scary.

PRODUCER: But will it work?

MELVIN: It's worth a try. And we've got one more shot at going back. Just one, remember. So you really have to pay attention in history class this time!

SANDRA: But how will I get back to the present? I don't know how to work the graphing calculator.

MELVIN: Here, I'll show you. First you have to calculate the standard deviation, locate the zero and identify a left bound for the desired zero. Then, you calculate probabilities for normally distributed random variabilities, using the permutational factoroids to generate co-tangentific randomalized integers...

MELVIN continues to work with calculator, growing concerned as he types in calculations.

SANDRA: I'll never figure that out. You're the science consultant. That's why I make the big bucks.

PRODUCER: You'll have to take him with you.

MELVIN: I think you'll need me. My calculations are indicating that even if you go back and do well in History class, we'll still have to go through the meta-chronological sequences to correctify the errors, which we can do because if you pass history, the glitches will be reset once we go back to before we used them in the first place...

PRODUCER: What does that mean?

MS. WOOD: They'll have to redo the great moments in American History. And get them right this time!

SANDRA: (to MELVIN) Okay, I promise to pay attention if you promise to use real words that we can all understand.

MELVIN: I'll try, if you carry some of the heavy stuff this time.

SANDRA: Deal.

SANDRA and MELVIN do a secret handshake type thing.

PRODUCER: But if you're going back to 8th grade, where the present is the future in the past, will Ms. Wood know why you're there in the past before she's been to the future in the present? How will you explain what you're doing there?

SANDRA: And what if my present self runs into my past old self and freaks out my past self and that messes up my future self and then my present self won't be the same self that went back to the past?

MS. WOOD: I thought of all that. That's why I brought another teacher with me from middle school.

MS. WOOD gestures to TELEVISION CREW MEMBER, who escorts MS. SMETEK in.

SANDRA: It's Ms. Smetek. The Language Arts teacher.

MS. SMETEK: Hi, everybody.

SANDRA, PRODUCER & MELVIN: (*dreamily, adoringly*) Hi, Ms. Smetek.

SANDRA: But I did great in Language Arts. I don't need to go back to that class again, too, do I?

MS. SMETEK: No, that's okay, really. I'm here to explain the concept of "Willing Suspension of Disbelief" to the audience.

PRODUCER, MELVIN and SANDRA: (*they don't know they are in a play*) What audience?

MS. SMETEK and MS. WOOD gesture to the theatre audience. PRODUCER, MELVIN and SANDRA look out, squinting at the lights, unable to see the audience, so they shrug or scratch their heads.

PRODUCER: What is Willing Suspension of Disbelief?

MS. SMETEK: It means that in a story, a movie or a play, the reader or the audience suspends their disbelief momentarily so they can enjoy the action. Like, even if everything doesn't make perfect sense scientifically, you just go with it anyway.

SANDRA: I get it. Like why would Little Red Riding Hood think the wolf looked anything like her grandmother?

PRODUCER: Or why would Dorothy's house be completely undamaged after falling out of the sky?

MELVIN: Or how we're going to be able to travel back to your 8th grade class and pay attention this time and that'll fix everything we messed up in the whole space/time continuum thing?

PRODUCER: (*skeptically*) I think you'd better put on disguises anyway, just in case. We can't afford any more mishaps.

Behind them scenery begins to fall apart. ASSISTANT PRODUCER rushes in speaking gibberish, TELEVISION CREW MEMBERS and IMPERIAL GUARDS enter, tussling with each other again.

PRODUCER: Here we go again. You'd better get going before things get even worse!

SANDRA: Eighth grade, here we come!

Time travel music, LIGHTS FADE, CURTAIN CLOSES.

Act II Scene 6

Setting: In front of curtain. Eighth grade hallway. MS. WOOD's 8th grade History class.

At Rise: SANDRA and MELVIN enter wearing trench coats, wigs or hats, and mustache disguises, hurriedly looking behind them. FAN CLUB of three girls (or boys) runs in after them. FAN CLUB clamors, all reaching for SANDRA at once. SANDRA basks in the attention, but MELVIN pulls her away. They crisscross the stage a couple of times, with the FAN CLUB chasing after them.

FAN #1: Can I have your autograph?

FAN #2: I can help you study for the history final.

FAN #3: I can't believe I'm standing this close to you. Is that mustache (*or hair*) real?

FAN #3 pulls on SANDRA's hair. SANDRA jumps back

FAN #2: Can I carry your backpack for you?

FAN #1: What are you doing after school? Want to go see the premiere of Harry Potter?

MELVIN: (*aside to SANDRA, pulling on him*) Remember why we're here?

SANDRA: (*reminding himself, talking himself into not going with fan club*) Study. Study. I'm here to study history. Must study history.

More FAN CLUB students enter, joining first three, and they all shout and pull at SANDRA.

Oh, no, what do we do now?

MELVIN: Run!

MELVIN and SANDRA dash around the stage with FAN CLUB following them until MELVIN pulls SANDRA behind riser or scenery to hide, and in confusion, FAN CLUB exits. SANDRA and MELVIN emerge from hiding place.

MELVIN: I think we've lost them. I thought we'd never get away. You've got to concentrate on tomorrow's final!

SANDRA: I know, you're right. But you have to admit they're really nice.

MELVIN: How is it that you have a fan club and you aren't even famous yet?

SANDRA: Animal magnetism?

SANDRA's disguise is all askew, she smiles with a really goofy expression.

MELVIN: No, I don't think that's it. But never mind, have you got your class notes?

SANDRA pulls out a wad of crumpled papers from her trench coat pocket; they fly everywhere and MELVIN tries to gather them up off the ground. SANDRA rifles through them and tries to make sense of the notes.

SANDRA: Okay, I think I've got it... Columbus's first voyage was in 1492 when he went to the West Indies...why did he do that? Maybe to play cricket? John Adams signed the Alien and Seduction Act...and in 1609 the Spanish found Santa Fe, I guess it was lost, to escape the Spanish Civil war...

MELVIN: *(trying to help sort through SANDRA's notes)* What? No, it was 1492...the Alien and Sedition act, you mean... Spanish Civil War, where are you getting that? Oh, no...

SANDRA: *(continuing to read from her mixed up notes)* Harriet Tubman was an escaped slave who wrote *Uncle Tom's Cabin*...

MELVIN: *(desperately trying to keep up with the corrections)* No, no, wrong Harriet, that was Harriet Beecher Stowe...



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