



**Sample Pages from
Clowns with Guns (A Vaudeville)**

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CLOWNS WITH GUNS

(A VAUDEVILLE)

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Christopher Evans



Clowns with Guns (a vaudeville)

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Printed in the USA

Characters

16 Either

The Emcee

Goober One

Goober Two

Goober Three

The Cheerleader

The Stoner

The Bully

The Shooter

Thoughts

Prayers

The Press (two or more)

Not Sarah

Tango Dancers (two or more)

The Volunteer

Production History

Clowns With Guns (A Vaudeville) debuted at the Montana State Thespian Festival at the University of Montana on February 4th, 2016. It was performed by Charles M. Russell High School's Thespian Troupe 2717.

Winner of Overall Outstanding Production - Drama

Written and Directed by Chris Evans. Assistant Directed by Lesli Evans.

The original cast was as follows.

The Emcee: D'Angelo Sterling White

Goober One: Anna Evans

Goober Two: Kenny Evans

Goober Three: Katie Morano

The Cheerleader: Paige Wilson

The Stoner: Kathleen O'Dell

The Bully: Kyrstin Hagins

The Shooter: Kaylee Osentowski

Thoughts: Austin Haney

Prayers: Aidan Evans

The Press: Bailey Collins & Micael Lynn

Not Sarah McLachlan: Maren Olson

Tango Dancers: Loran Fairhurst & Bailey Collins

The Volunteer: Christina Brennan

Some thoughts and warnings

I have been asked to give you some thoughts and (yep, warnings) about this play.

I wrote CLOWNS in response to what seemed to be an acceptance of mass and school shootings that took place in America in 2015. We would stop for a minute and be sad, give our thoughts and prayers, then we would do nothing to stop it from ever happening again. We simply were waiting for the next shooting and for the cycle of acceptance to begin again. I felt helpless. I also was really angry.

So I started to write. I ran it past my Advanced acting class where I teach. They were shocked and excited by the message and the energy and anger. I found out that they were angry too. They go through the endless lockdown drills. They are the first line of defense when one of their friends are depressed and angry. They feel it too.

As I told an offended student at the Montana State Thespian Convention, I had two choices. As an artist I could do something or I could do nothing. Nothing wasn't an option. So, here in book form, is CLOWNS WITH GUNS (a vaudeville). This will make some people unhappy. Some will get it. But I can guarantee your audience will not be apathetic. If you need guidance or questions answered, hit me up through Theatrefolk.

Some Thoughts-(no pun intended)

- 1) **THIS IS A MEAN PLAY.** It attacks an audience and doesn't quit. Watering down the mean and brutal parts will only make your production watered down. The message is clear and mean. It's supposed to be. Be aware of your school situation. **FULL DISCLOSURE:** I decided not to do this play at our school due to a student suicide the spring before. I waited until our State Thespian convention. We created waves there. That's what good theatre is supposed to do.
- 2) **TALK TO YOUR PRINCIPAL ABOUT THIS PLAY.** Some of you are going to be met with "No." My Principal and SRO weren't CLOWNS fans. If you truly want to do this play you will try and convince them.
- 3) **KEEP AN OPEN DIALOGUE WITH PARENTS.** I told the cast to talk to their parents. Have them read the script. My doors were open during every rehearsal. I invited anybody who wanted to monitor the progress of the play to come and watch. Parents came to rehearsals. The best thing you can do is NOT make this production a surprise to anybody. This show is about creating dialogue. Create dialogue.
- 4) **THE LAWLER MONOLOGUE.** I have altered a line in the monologue. It was something Lawler said before he killed himself and it was ugly. I am giving you the option to use his words. It's after the line "temple of his head." If you want you can add Lawler's words, "**and uttered, 'No one will ever call my brother a pussy again.'**" Then committed suicide."

- 5) **WHO ARE THE CLOWNS?** In our production The Emcee, The Shooter, The Cheerleader, The Stoner, The Bully, Thoughts and Prayers were the ones in Clown makeup.
- 6) **TRUST THE LAST LOCKDOWN.** It works. Don't move. Stare at the audience.

This was also meant to be an experiment in teaching absurd theatre and satire. Our cast got it and once the rules of realism were thrown out, CLOWNS WITH GUNS came to life.

I write this after Orlando. 49 lives gone in a matter of minutes. If you, through this play, can get the message that this has to stop out to one person, maybe we can go to school, work, a movie theatre, church, a dance club or even an after work Christmas party without a Kevlar vest.

If there's more let me know. Thank you. I truly know that artists can effect change. You can effect change.

We have a choice. Do something or do nothing.

To quote Sondheim,
Send in the Clowns

-Chris

Quotes from those involved...

Lisa Marie Hyslop (Adjudicator-Montana State Thespian

Convention) *Clowns with Guns* is a riveting exploration of our own growing desensitization of violence carried out in a mass setting. This high energy deeply thoughtful roller coaster ride transports audiences right to the edge of their seats and asks them to peer over the brink of reason into their own apathy, fear and ultimately what it means to be compassionate. With a fast paced plot, specific and relatable characters and an amazingly producible wealth of spectacle *Clowns with Guns* brings young performers and audiences together in their quest for personal responsibility and action in the face of tragedy and loss.

Austin Haney (played Thoughts in original production) It was fascinating getting to play a role without any lines. The sheer physicality it requires as well as finding the right characterization was a challenge I loved. That entire show made me think harder and differently about everything than any other play. For an historian and as someone who considers themselves well-versed in culture it was heartbreaking to notice all the little details thrown into the play. It jumps out at you and is essentially holding a funhouse mirror up to our world. It shows us the often horrid and senseless reality that comes with the worst things in our nature. Every little thing that happens in that play is meant to be seen and felt. The exaggerated nature of the acting it requires is in itself something to examine closer in relation to ourselves. But overall it has been one of my favourites to watch and perform.

Paige Wilson (played Cheerleader in original production) The show really reaches out and connects with its audience. Since it is absurdist theatre people are far more willing to open their mind to a subject that they usually guard against and don't wish to talk about. The play breaches the topic and presents it in such a manner that it can't be avoided or ignored.

Kaylee Osentowski (played the Shooter in the original production)

I would just like to say this show was very impactful to me as an actress and artist. To perform the "evil role" was eye opening. No one ever sees themselves as being in the wrong. The negatives in one's life piles and piles until students and even adults don't know how to express anymore. Violence is an easy out. The excuses ballet the Shooter performs is a cry for help. This show has granted me empathy and breaks my heart with its relevance daily.

Circus music begins. Four decorated elephant stands are seen empty on stage. THOUGHTS, a clown, and PRAYERS, another clown, enter, meet center and then see the audience. They shake hands and go their separate ways to start the show. One by one THOUGHTS and PRAYERS bring on THE CHEERLEADER, THE STONER, THE BULLY and THE SHOOTER, place them on their respective elephant stands and then leave. A line of 3 people enter (THE GOOBERS). They scramble to see all of the exhibits as THOUGHTS and PRAYERS bring on THE EMCEE. They straighten his clothes and point him toward the stage and then leave. The EMCEE takes a grand step downstage and then...

EMCEE: Ladies and gentlemen, boys and girls, the quick and the dead, I welcome you today to the greatest show on Earth. Today we find out the answer to the greatest question that can be asked.

GOOBER 1: What's for dinner?

EMCEE: No.

GOOBER 2: What's on TV?

EMCEE: No.

GOOBER 3: Can I have that?

EMCEE: No. *(pause)* Have what?

GOOBER 3: Never mind.

EMCEE: No, my friends. The question is "Am I walking out alive today?" It's SCHOOL-SHOOT-O-RAMA! This is where you, the honest customer, walk into your educational palace and hopefully come out with the greatest prize of all. Your life! Gather round to see the freaks and geeks that populate every high school in the land.

The EMCEE walks over to the SHOOTER exhibit.

Meet the Shooter!

THE GOOBERS rush over.

GOOBERS: OOOOOO!

EMCEE: So sad. So depressed.

GOOBERS: Awwwwwwwwwwww.

EMCEE: But so good with a gun.

The EMCEE produces a gun. THE GOOBERS recoil in terror.

Watch him get his revenge on ANYBODY or EVERYBODY!
Ladies and Gentlemen, I present the Shooter!

THE SHOOTER magically comes to life as the EMCEE gives THE SHOOTER the gun.

GOOBER 3: It's alive!

THE GOOBERS scream. THE SHOOTER speaks.

The following is underscored with THE DANCE OF THE SUGARPLUM FAIRY.

SHOOTER: There's something wrong with my head. I have a cold. I have no love in my life. I have too much love in my life. My girlfriend won't answer my texts. My parents don't love me. My breakfast was cold. Girls don't like me. Boys want to beat me up. Boys don't like me. Girls want to beat me up. I'm not gay. I might be gay. You aren't gonna believe how gay I am. I'm soooooo depressed. The cheese on my burger was cold. I was bullied as a child. I went off my medication. I wanted life to be like the video games. My dad left us. My mom left us. That band told me to do it. That teacher made me mad. I don't know who I am. Everybody has to pay.

THE SHOOTER begins to aim the gun at the audience.

Everybody has to pay.

Gun is now aimed at the audience.

EVERYBODY HAS TO PAY!

EMCEE: WOOOOO! What's more scary than a teenager with a gun?
And excuses?

GOOBER 1: A scary movie?

EMCEE: No.

GOOBER 2: A big dog with rabies?

EMCEE: No.

GOOBER 3: Watermelon?

EMCEE: No-what? Watermelon?

GOOBER 3: Green's a scary color to me.

EMCEE: Okay. No. There is nothing more scary than a depressed teenager with a gun. Ask her.

*The EMCEE points to THE CHEERLEADER exhibit.
THE GOOBERS run to her.*

The Cheerleader. So pretty. So important. So sassy. Meet our first potential victim.

THE CHEERLEADER magically comes to life.

GOOBER 3: She's beautiful. Like a painting.

GOOBER 2: I love her.

GOOBER 1: No, I love her more!

GOOBER 2: No I do!

GOOBERS 1 and 2 begin to fight.

EMCEE: Hey! No violence!

THE GOOBERS apologize to each other.

So, let's meet the top of the mountain. This is where beauty lies.
This is the Cheerleader!

CHEERLEADER: (*cheering*) 1-2-3-4. Everybody hit the floor!

THE CHEERLEADER speaks.

When I was a little girl, I wanted to be a princess. I would dance and sing and boss my brothers around. My Daddy bought me a tiara to complete the picture. My kingdom was named Me-ovia. I was the all-knowing powerful dancing princess who was tough but kind.

She cheers.

5-6-7-8. I'm going home in a big ol' crate!

She speaks.

I later discovered that being a cheerleader had even more power than a princess. I would say something and the crowd would repeat it faithfully. I'd say cheer. They'd cheer. I'd say boo. They'd boo. It was all the power I didn't have as a princess and it was intoxicating. Boys looked at me and girls wanted to be me. It was fantastic.

She cheers.

He's aggressive. The shooter is aggressive.

H-e-is-agg-r-e-ss-i-v-e. He's aggressive! Yay!

She speaks.

I didn't realize how much power I didn't have until he came in the school looking for me and people like me. I hid. I waited not knowing if he was going to find me or not. I saw the scared looks of the other kids, I smiled at them and mouthed the words "it's gonna be okay." I think that's when they relaxed. I was the princess again. What I said mattered and the kingdom followed my every word. When he came in the room and found us, everyone started to scream and run. Not me. When he pointed the gun at me I just smiled. This peasant wouldn't hurt me. I was the princess of Me-ovia.

EMCEE: What do you say, folks? It's time.

A drumroll starts.

Will she make it?

THE GOOBERS answer "Yes." enthusiastically.

Or won't she?

THE GOOBERS answer "No." enthusiastically.

Only the Shooter will tell. Oh, Shooter?

THE SHOOTER magically comes to life and points the gun at THE CHEERLEADER.

CHEERLEADER: (*realistically*) Don't. Please. Please. PLEASE!

THE SHOOTER stylistically shoots THE CHEERLEADER. THE CHEERLEADER slumps as if unplugged.

EMCEE: Awwwwww. She was so pretty. I bet a lot of people are going to cry at her funeral. Ladies and Gentlemen, in order to make us all feel soooo much better, it's time for Thoughts and Prayers. So let me introduce...

Thoughts and Prayers music (annoyingly happy) begins. THOUGHTS, the clown, steps out.

Thoughts. Aaaaaannnd-

PRAYERS, the clown, steps out.

Prayers.

THOUGHTS and PRAYERS go to THE CHEERLEADER and take her offstage. "Did you know?" music transitions. The EMCEE steps forward.

EMCEE: Did you know that on July 26th, 1764, four Lenape Indian warriors stormed the schoolhouse in what is now Newcastle, Pennsylvania? Schoolmaster Enoch Brown plead for mercy but was murdered along with a number of his young students. It is called the most notorious incident of a battle between the natives of the area and British policies of the time. It is also the first recorded incident of school violence on American soil.

Music out.

GOOBER 1: Education and entertainment. We sure are getting our two dollars worth.

An air raid siren sounds.

EMCEE: Uh oh. You know what that means. It's time for a LOCKDOWN!

Lockdown music starts. Mass Chaos. Everybody rushes the stage in a mass and highly comic panic. When it is done everybody winds up back in the spot they just were.

GOOBER 1: That was scary.

GOOBER 2: We're right back where we ended up.

GOOBER 3: Shhhhh. Be entertained, dang you.

EMCEE: It sure was scary. But wait. Now it's time to meet our next exhibit. So mellow. So chill. So stoned. Our next victim can always tell the difference between onions and Funyuns. Here is the Stoner!

THE GOOBERS gather around.

GOOBER 2: He looks like he's asleep.

EMCEE: He's not.

The EMCEE waves his arm.

Watch.

THE STONER magically comes to life and notices the audience.

STONER: It's all a conspiracy, man. JFK. Two shooters.

pause

Conspiracy. The Illuminati controls the White House.

pause

Conspiracy. Cartoons are subtly slipping in messages to women telling them to change the way they look and to legalize pot.

pause

Conspiracy.

pause

PROOF? I got proof, man. Peanuts cartoons. Follow me here. Yeah, Snoopy and Charlie Brown. I know. But you really gotta look at Marcie and Peppermint Patty.

pause

Marcie. With the glasses. Always following Peppermint Patty, the redhead who always came across a little gay to me, doing her bidding. (*imitating Marcie*) "Yes, sir. No, sir." They grew up. Who did they become, man? Who did they become? Flash forward to Scooby Doo. Velma. With the glasses. Daphne. The redhead. The HOT redhead. Riding around in the back of a van named the Mystery Machine. Together. Forever.

pause

It's not a mystery to me, man. Peppermint Patty changed her look to become hot Daphne, an alias, because she wanted Freddy. Why was Velma always cranky? Because Daphne didn't swing Velma's way.

pause

See? You need people like me to educate people like you. What about the legalizing drugs thing? Marcie and Peppermint Patty grew up to be Velma and Daphne, who rode around in the back of a van seeing ghosts and solving mysteries with a talking dog.

pause

A talking dog.

pause

Dogs don't talk, man. Change your looks. Don't be gay. Smoke weed every day. Cartoons warped us all, man.

EMCEE: What do you say, folks? Will he make it?

THE GOOBERS: (*enthusiastically*) Yes!

EMCEE: Or won't he?

THE GOOBERS: (*enthusiastically*) No!

EMCEE: Only the Shooter can decide. Oh, Shooter?

THE SHOOTER magically comes to life points the gun at THE STONER.

STONER: C'mon, man. It's just a show.

THE SHOOTER fires and kills THE STONER. THE STONER slumps as if unplugged.

Thoughts and Prayers music starts. THOUGHTS and PRAYERS enter and take THE STONER offstage.

GOOBER 3: I'm gonna miss him. He smelled like Colorado.

"Did you know?" music starts.

EMCEE: Did you know that on Thursday, January 20th, 1983, at Parkway South Junior High School in Manchester Missouri, eighth grader David F. Lawler brought to school a blue duffel bag containing two family owned .22 Caliber pistols and a suicide note that outlined his intention to kill the next person speaking ill of his older brother Ken?

pause

He had received 100 rounds of ammunition used in the shooting as a Christmas present. Lawler entered a study hall classroom at approximately 11:55 am and opened fire with the two pistols, hitting two fellow students. During the shooting, the study hall teacher unsuccessfully attempted to intervene and calm Lawler. With all of his classmates hiding under and behind their desks, Lawler placed one of the pistols to the temple of his head then committed suicide.

GOOBER 3: I haven't felt this smart since I fixed that light socket with a fork.

EMCEE: I bet it was shocking.

GOOBER 3: What?

An air raid siren sounds.

EMCEE: You know what that means?

Lockdown music starts.

It's time for another LOCKDOWN!

Chaos again. A little less energy with this one. Not a lot less but noticeably different. At the end, everybody is back in their original place.

GOOBER 2: We are exactly where we were.

EMCEE: Now it's time for the musical portion of our show.

Everybody rushes on stage to take their place.

A one-and a-two-and a-

*The following is sung to the tune
"SHOW ME THE WAY TO GO HOME."*

ALL: Show me the way to go home.

There's a shooter in the school, he wants me dead.
I had my breakfast 'bout an hour ago, and he's aiming right for my head.
Wherever he may roam, in the library or on the phone.
I'll just be hiding singing my song,
Show me the way to go home.

EMCEE: *(to the audience)* EVERYBODY!

There should be no, or little, response from the audience.

Ahhhh. If music be the food of love...they must be full.

pause

Well, like the DMV asks, like the grocer asks, like the shooter asks, "WHO'S NEXT?" Who likes to pick on the weak? Who likes to make you feel small? Who likes to act like you don't even exist at all? It's the Bully!

THE GOOBERS rush to the exhibit as THE BULLY magically comes to life.

BULLY: It's nature. Survival of the fittest. Not everybody's going to like this, but I was put on this Earth to weed out the weaklings and separate them from the herd. It helps us survive. How? You take a look at some booger-eatin' moron in the lunchroom and you have to realize that if he continued his bloodline, our future looks pretty bleak. His little offspring running into traffic creating more little offspring running into traffic. The highways would run red with the blood of morons. Nobody needs that.

pause

That's where I come in. I put them in their place. I separate them from the herd. They need their own land. Dumbassistan. I'll fly them there. Girlfriend by my side. I'm like a superhero saving the world from idiots.

pause

You're welcome.

EMCEE: Will he make it?

THE GOOBERS: (*enthusiastically*) Yes!

EMCEE: Or won't he?

THE GOOBERS: (*enthusiastically*) No!

EMCEE: Only the Shooter can decide. Oh, Shooter?

THE SHOOTER magically comes to life and aims the gun at THE BULLY.

BULLY: Oh, big man has a gun. Oh, wow.

THE SHOOTER fires and (apparently) kills THE BULLY. THE BULLY slumps as if unplugged.

EMCEE: OHHHHHH, MYYYYYYYYY! I guess his girlfriend's name was Karma.

THE BULLY comes back to life. Struggling. Injured.

GOOBER 1: He's still alive!

GOOBER 2: Like a Zombie!

THE SHOOTER shoots THE BULLY again. THE BULLY slumps as if unplugged.

"Thoughts and Prayers" music begins.

THOUGHTS and PRAYERS enter and take THE BULLY offstage.

An air raid siren sounds.

EMCEE: Oh, look. Time for another lockdown.

Lockdown music plays.

People halfheartedly move in fake chaos. Everybody is back in their original spot when the music stops. GOOBER 1 raises their hand.

EMCEE: You with the hand up.

GOOBER 1: If we wind up where we were, why do we bother to move at all?

EMCEE: Because it looks really good.

GOOBER 2: To who?

EMCEE: To them.

THE PRESS enter barking like angry dogs. When they arrive at GOOBER 3...

PRESS 1: Who are you?

GOOBER 3: My name is—

PRESS 2: Where were you?

GOOBER 3: I was right here. Still am.

PRESS 3: Tell us how you feel.

GOOBER 3: Little gassy. I had one of those convenience store burritos.

PRESS 1: About the shootings.

GOOBER 3: Oh. I was sooo scared and then the Shooter shot all those people and we all ran around and then I felt real bad and then you guys showed up. Am I gonna be on the TV?

PRESS 2: Every channel!

GOOBER 3: Hi, Mom!

THE PRESS run off barking angrily.

GOOBER 1: Does any body care that the Shooter is still here?



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