



Sample Pages from Power Play

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POWER PLAY

A DRAMA IN ONE ACT BY
Lindsay Price



Power Play

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Characters

3W+2M

Bitter: A goth girl. Very observant with a sarcastic wit.

Belly: An overweight guy who uses humour as a survival tactic.

Brawn: The star football player. King of the castle and knows it.

Beauty: The self-professed “most popular girl” at the school.

Beaker: A small Asian girl (Korean). Extremely intelligent, extremely withdrawn.

See Appendix for alternate casting suggestions.

Setting

A bare stage or unit set that suggests a school hallway.

Canadian Version

See Appendix for suggested Canadian changes.

Author’s Note ** Important **

This play contains strong language and a graphic gun confrontation. I understand there are schools that strictly prohibit both types of violence in the theatre. However, this play is about violence. More specifically it’s about violence from a teenager’s perspective. To that end, any group producing this play is expressly forbidden from altering the language or the gun confrontation in any way.

Guns are not toys. Above all else, YOU MUST take the gun use seriously and YOU MUST be safe. I strongly recommend that the gun used in the play be 100% fake. The sound of the gunshot can easily come from a sound effect. The play steps out of its world many times and makes note of the fact that it’s only a play. A theatrical solution would not be out of place.

If you use anything approaching a ‘real’ gun (even a BB gun, a cap gun, or the like) I urge you ensure a certified firearms expert be present at all rehearsals and performances.

Make safety the number one priority in your production.

Childlike music plays (think music box). The five characters enter in robotic fashion with frozen grins. They are all holding oversized books (as if they were in a children's play). They face the audience at centre stage.

ALL: You too can predict teen violence!

BEAUTY: This beautifully crafted handbook,

BITTER: With really big type,

BEAKER: Colourful pictures,

BRAWN: And lots of graphs!

BEAUTY: Has all the early warning signs,

BELLY: All the red flags,

BRAWN: All the "peculiar" behaviours,

BEAKER: All the causes,

BITTER: Right here at your fingertips!

ALL: All you have to do is,

BELLY: Keep an eye out!

BRAWN: Be observant!

BEAKER: Sneak around and spy on students when they're not looking!

BEAUTY: Hmm, maybe not.

BELLY: Don't do that.

ALL: That would be wrong!

BEAUTY: (*holding up handbook*) All the clues are right here.

BEAKER: In really big type!

BRAWN: With colourful pictures,

BELLY: And lots of graphs,

BITTER: Right at your fingertips!

ALL: Liiiiiiiiike.

BRAWN: Are you suffering from a breakdown in the family unit?

BELLY: Are you poor?

BEAKER: Do you suffer from racial discrimination?

BITTER: Are you affected by media portrayals of sex and violence?

BEAUTY: Are your grades plummeting?

BELLY: Do you feel rejected?

BITTER: Picked on?

BEAKER: Isolated?

BRAWN: Alone?

BELLY: Are you angry?

BITTER: Do you write angry poems?

BEAKER: Draw angry pictures?

BEAUTY: Do you want to do angry things to small animals?

ALL: You too can predict teen violence. It's as easy as one, two, three!

There is the sound of a gunshot. This startles the characters. They all freeze in reaction poses to the gunshot. BITTER steps forward. She speaks to the audience in her normal voice.

BITTER: High School is all about power. Who has it. Who doesn't. Violence is power. A lot of people think they can't get power. Or that they can't get violent. Oooh I couldn't kill a fly. I couldn't hurt anybody. It's not that hard. It doesn't have to be hot, hard, pow, explosive. It can be cold, slow and sneaky. Get them when they least expect it. That's the way to sap someone of their power. You get them when they have no idea what's coming.

There is the sound of another gunshot. All the characters run offstage in different directions. There is the sound of a fire alarm that grows in volume. All five characters rush on from various places. They rush to centre stage, all shaking, all breathing heavily. This is the real deal – no comedy, no cuteness.

ALL: Get out of here. Now. Now!

There is the sound of a gunshot. They all throw their arms over their heads. The fire alarm shuts off. The five stand up and look at the audience.

BITTER: One of us will go into politics.

BEAUTY: One of us will be a single mother.

BELLY: One of us will have four different careers.

BRAWN: One of us will try to hide. But it won't do any good.

BEAKER: 'Cause one of us can't take it anymore.

BITTER: Is it me?

BELLY: Is it me?

BRAWN: Is it me?

BEAKER: Is it me?

BEAUTY: Is it me?

The fire alarm sounds. All five breathe heavily as if they've been running.

ALL: Get out of here. Now. Now!

There is the sound of a gunshot. They all throw their arms over their heads. The fire alarm shuts off.

BITTER: Why did you say that? I was there. It was me.

BEAUTY: No it was me.

BRAWN: I was there. I know what happened.

BELLY: You have no idea.

BEAKER: Were you there?

BELLY: Were you?

They look to the audience.

ALL: Were you there? In the hallway?

BITTER: Empty or full.

BEAKER: Doesn't matter.

ALL: Fat! Ugly! Fag! Fall! Slam! Bitch! Die!

BEAUTY: Is the hallway...

BRAWN: ...just a means to...

BITTER: ...get from one class to the other?

BELLY: Not for me.

BEAKER: Never.

BITTER: Do you know...

BEAKER: ...what happens in the hallway?

There is a sudden change in tone. All five start a disco-style clapping rhythm. They become cheerful and animated.

ALL: (*singsong, upbeat*) In the hallway.

As they each introduce themselves the others keep up the clapping rhythm.

BEAKER: People call me “Beaker.” And “Science Geek.” And “Brown Nose.” Nobody likes a smart girl. Boys don’t like smart girls.

ALL: In the hallway.

BRAWN: People call me “Brawn.” They yell it out from the stands when I send a receiver to the ground. BRAWN!!!

ALL: In the hallway.

BEAUTY: People call me “Beauty Queen.” They think they’re being funny. But there’s nothing wrong with being beautiful.

ALL BUT BITTER: In the hallway.

BITTER: This sucks.

ALL BUT BITTER: (*with a dirty look at BITTER*) In the hallway.

BELLY: People used to call me “Belly” ‘cause I’m fat. Now they call me “Belly Laugh.” I’m the jokester with the moster. You make them laugh and you’re a star.

ALL BUT BITTER: In the hallway.

BITTER: The jokester with the moster?

ALL BUT BITTER: In the hallway.

BITTER: You’ve got to be kidding.

BEAUTY: Would you just go.

BRAWN: Come on.

BITTER: You come on. They got the idea. My hands are sore.

BEAUTY: You have to tell them your name. That's the point. There's no point if you don't tell them your name.

BITTER: It's stupid.

BELLY: We did it.

BITTER: I rest my case.

BEAUTY: (*referring to the audience*) They're not going to wait all day. They might even start to throw things.

BITTER: Fine. Fine. (*with fake cheeriness*) People call me Bitter.

BELLY: I wonder why.

BITTER: I'd rather be Bitter than Blubber.

BELLY: Are you calling me fat?

BEAKER: Hey guys...

BITTER: If the 48 fits...

BEAUTY: You guys!

BRAWN: Let's get this show on the road. I got practice at 3:30.

BEAKER: Are we ready?

BITTER: Like the man said. Lets get this show on the road.

A bell rings. BRAWN and BELLY go offstage. They bring out a small table. There is a pile of socks on the table. BEAUTY and BITTER go off and get stools for all the characters. Once they are seated, they freeze while BEAKER talks to the audience.

BEAKER: Welcome to my world. This is a monologue so I actually get to show you my true self. (*she flashes a big grin*) How are ya! Want to hear a joke? How do you know you've spent too much time in a Korean house? You eat ramen and Kimchee for breakfast! I guess it loses something in the translation. You won't see the real me once I go over there (*she gestures to the table*). At home, I'm the one who won't shut up. At school, it's not the same.

BEAKER trips and falls. The others laugh. BEAKER picks herself up, when she turns to the others they stop laughing and go back into their freeze.

BEAKER: I get tripped all the time. I carry around a lot of books and they always go flying. I guess it's funny to see me fall. I probably get tripped every day. And that doesn't include the whispers. The things I find in my locker. And why? Because I'm small? Because I'm Korean? Because I have the highest marks in the school? 'Cause I tell bad jokes? Who knows?

The others start laughing. They are playing the voice of a mob, not their individual selves.

BELLY: Hey look it's the flying nun!

BEAUTY: She can't be a nun. She's not Catholic.

BELLY: Bet you she's a virgin though! Who'd sleep with her?

They laugh and then stop suddenly.

BEAKER: It's like being thrown to the wolves sometimes. Rip out your throat before one, two, three. They're so quick and... sometimes I just... oh... I don't... What is violence? I've always thought it had to be physical, you know? Like what that football goon does? What they do to me... It's not a hit. It's not a punch. But why am I so bruised?

A bell rings. The others come out of their freeze and start darn ing socks. Except for BRAWN who's reading a Sports Illustrated. This is Home-Ec class. BEAKER enters the scene. She stumbles and her books go sprawling over the table.

BEAKER: *(she is quiet and completely withdrawn)* Sorry.

BELLY: Late again. Don't you wear a watch?

BEAUTY: Do you have to spread your stuff all over the place?

BEAKER: Sorry. *(she picks up her stuff)*

BELLY: If I was always late I'd be in so much trouble.

BITTER: That's 'cause you're stupid. You need all the help you can get.

Once BEAKER has all her stuff she tries to sit in the empty seat beside BEAUTY.

BEAUTY: That seat's taken.

BEAKER: Sorry. *(she looks around)* I... I...

BEAUTY: What. Are you trying to say something?

BELLY: Spit it out girl!

BEAKER: There aren't any other seats.

BEAUTY: Is that my problem?

BEAKER: Sorry.

BITTER: Oh sit down. The seat's not taken.

BEAKER: Sorry.

BITTER: And stop saying "Sorry." What the hell are you sorry for? She should be sorry for being such a bitch.

BEAUTY: Hey!

BEAKER: Sorry.

BELLY: (*imitating*) Sorry.

BEAKER sits down and BEAUTY moves her chair over so that she's as far away from BEAKER as possible.

BITTER: Very mature.

BEAUTY: At least I don't look like Frankenstein.

BITTER: Frankenstein's monster.

BEAUTY: What?

BITTER: Frankenstein is the name of the doctor not the monster.

BEAUTY: Whatever.

BITTER: Now that's a comeback. I don't know how I'm even standing after that.

BEAUTY: You're just bitter 'cause you look like a freak.

BITTER: If you're going to insult me Beauty Queen get it right.

BEAUTY: Shut up freak.

BELLY: Soooooooo. Did anyone see Mr. Mann on TV last night?

BITTER: Again?

BELLY: He looked pretty dapper in white suit number 637.

BEAUTY: No man should wear a white suit.

BELLY: Least of all Mr. Mann.

BEAUTY: It's so tacky.

BITTER: What was he spouting off on this time?

BELLY: (*in a low booming voice*) Zero tolerance, (*like an echo*) ence, ence, ence.

BRAWN: (*looking up from his magazine*) For what?

BELLY: For violence, (*like an echo*) ence, ence, ence.

BRAWN: Huh. (*he goes back to his magazine*)

BEAUTY: It's 'cause of that thing in Palmer County, isn't it?

BITTER: Ah yes. The thing.

BEAUTY: You know, the guy. Shot a football player. In the locker room.

BRAWN: Who did?

BEAUTY: The guy. The gay guy. In Palmer County.

BRAWN: Oh yeah. The gay guy.

BITTER: The guy has a name.

BELLY: It was all over the news.

BRAWN: What do I need the news for?

BELLY: News schmooze who needs it?

BITTER: His name was Jason Williams. He was tired of being a punching bag.

BRAWN: Well he shouldn't have told people he was gay. It's his own fault.

BITTER: It is NOT his fault. He did not deserve to be treated like...

BRAWN: (*interrupting*) And Ricky deserved to get shot? Is that what you're saying? Is that what you're telling me?

There is silence.

BELLY: Sooooo. Mr. Mann was very eloquent. He probably practiced the speech for days. (*imitating the principal*) My school is full of good kids. I'm not going to let a few bad apples spoil the bunch. (*breaking off the imitation*) Did you know apples came in a bunch? I learn new things everyday. (*back to the imitation*) Violence begets violence. That's why we've got to stamp it out. Tear it out at the roots. Vanquish it. Violence is not going to tear my school

apart. Violence isn't going to be a factor, period. There will be no violence at my school.

BEAKER: (*not believing*) Huh.

BELLY: (*still imitating*) No guns, no knives, no threats, no words of violence. No actions of violence. No violence, period.

BEAKER: Huh.

BELLY: (*to BEAKER*) Did you actually say something?

BEAKER: What? Me? No, sorry.

BEAUTY: I think it's a good idea. The last thing we need is some loser going all psycho and shooting people just 'cause they got up on the wrong side of the bed.

BRAWN: It'd never happen here.

BITTER: Why?

BRAWN: 'Cause everyone in this school knows I'd kick their ass if they did something stupid like that.

BELLY: Wouldn't kicking someone's ass fall under the header of violence?

BRAWN: I don't have to worry about Mr. Mann.

BITTER: I bet you don't.

BELLY: Will someone tell me why I'm darning socks? Why am I being graded on socks? Why are socks part of my grade? When I write my SAT's why will the knowledge of how to darn a sock help me? (*to BEAKER*) Hey... you...

BITTER: She has a name.

BELLY: You're going to get perfect on your SAT's right? Tell me why I have to darn socks. Better yet, why don't you do it for me. You'll probably get perfect on that too.

BEAKER: I... I...

BEAUTY: Do us a favour; if you're not going to speak in sentences, don't talk.

BELLY: Hey! Brawn! How come you don't have to darn socks? Aren't you worried about how it'll affect your SAT's?

BRAWN: No.

BEAUTY: Why not?

BRAWN: 'Cause.

BITTER: Way to express yourself.

BELLY: He's scholarship boy. Scholarship man! Duh duh duh duh! Oh save me Scholarship man!

BEAUTY: Get off me!

BEAKER: You still have to write your SAT's.

BRAWN: You may have to.

BELLY: That's the way to tell 'em Brawn. You rock Scholarship man.

BRAWN: You making fun of me, belly boy?

BELLY: No way. I'm on your side.

BRAWN: Like I need you on my side. I've had enough of this. (*referring to the teacher*) If she asks where I've gone, say I'm in the bathroom.

BELLY: For the whole period? Gotta cut back on those liquids.

BRAWN: (*grabbing hold of BELLY's head and slamming it down on the table*) Did you say something to me?

BELLY: No.

BRAWN: That's what I thought. (*letting BELLY up*)

The others freeze at the table. BRAWN comes down to address the audience.

BRAWN: This is my world. Pretty much what you see is what you get. Brawn is the king of the castle. I do what I want, when I want. Get in my way and I'll slam your head on a table. Runs in the family. Big dad. Big brothers. Nobody gets in our way. I don't have a problem with violence. What would hockey be without guys bashing each other in the head? And football without tackling? World's a better place when you can get your aggression out. Is it my fault some people can't keep up?

There is the sound of a fire alarm. All five characters rush downstage, they are all breathing heavily.

BEAUTY: What is it, what's the matter?

BELLY: I don't know.

BEAKER: Did you hear a shot?

BRAWN: Where do we go?

BITTER: Get out of here. Now. Now!

There is the sound of a gunshot. They all throw their arms over their heads. The fire alarm shuts off. The five stand up and look at the audience.

BRAWN: One of us will get married and have kids.

BELLY: One of us will never get married.

BEAKER: One of us will be divorced by twenty-five.

BEAUTY: One of us will pull the trigger.

BITTER: One of us won't make it.

They start the clapping rhythm.

ALL: (*singsong*) In the hallway.

BITTER: It's always behind your back.

BEAKER: You turn around and no one's looking your way.

BELLY: You got to be quicker than them. Make yourself part of the joke.

BITTER: Sometimes it's spit. Sometimes it's an apple core.

BELLY: Sometimes you get thrown against your locker. But they're gone before you turn around.

BRAWN: The hallway's the best place.

BEAUTY: Teachers have no idea what goes on.

BRAWN: Bathroom's pretty good too.

BELLY: You'd think the bathroom would be a safe place.

BEAKER: Somewhere to hide.

BITTER: Always behind your back.

BEAUTY: (*whispering*) You look like a freak!

BEAKER: (*whispering*) Hey fat boy!

BRAWN: (*whispering*) Go back where you came from.

BITTER: (*whispering*) I hear she sleeps around.

BELLY: (*whispering*) I hear his dad hits the bottle. And his mom.

BEAKER: (*not a whisper*) I hear she upchucks.

BITTER: (*not a whisper*) I hear he's just like dear old dad.

BEAUTY & BRAWN: Hey, hey, hey!

BRAWN: What do you think you're saying, huh?

BEAUTY: We're not in this.

BRAWN: People don't say things about us.

BEAUTY: We're the popular people. Nothing bad ever happens to us.

BRAWN: We don't get whispered about.

BEAUTY: We don't get tripped in the halls.

BRAWN: We don't get pushed into lockers.

BEAUTY: We do the pushing. And the talking.

BELLY: Don't forget the tripping.

BRAWN: We own this school.

BEAUTY: You're the freaks. You're the losers.

BRAWN: I don't even know what we're doing in this stupid play.

BEAUTY: It's obviously one of you three who went psycho.

BRAWN: Why would we go psycho just 'cause somebody picked on us?

BEAUTY: If you can't take the heat stay out of the kitchen.

BRAWN: Yeah.

BEAUTY and BRAWN go off to the side.

BELLY: Weeeeeeeell. Somebody told us.

BITTER: Now there's a threat. Stay out of the kitchen.

BEAKER: We're not losers, are we?

BITTER: Of course we are. But so are they. They just don't know it.

BEAKER: How can they be losers? They don't look like losers. They don't act like losers.

BELLY: It's always the losers who go psycho.

BITTER: Is that right?

BELLY: That's right. Statistically speaking, losers go psycho.

BITTER: Statistically speaking? Bring out the numbers stat boy.

BELLY: I'm very up on these things.

BEAKER: Why? Why are we the losers? Why do they get to be popular and we have to be losers? Who decided that?

BELLY: The big ole hand of God came down and said, "You! You are thin and you have a pleasant face. You are a cheerleader and you will be popular. And you! You dye your hair really strange colors and wear black nail polish. We don't like that. You are a loser."

BITTER: They're only the popular people 'cause we let them.

BEAKER: It's my fault?

BELLY: Teachers let them be popular. Their parents let them be popular.

BITTER: But we let them treat us like dirt. We let them treat us like losers.

BEAKER: So it's my fault?

BITTER: I didn't say that. But you have a choice. You can let them make you think you're dirt or you can do something about it.

BEAKER: Like what?

BITTER: I'm not going to do all the work for you.

BELLY: What do we do now? They railroaded the play.

BITTER: Leave it to me.

BITTER joins BRAWN and BEAUTY. BELLY comes downstage and talks to the audience.

BELLY: Violence is the stuff you see on TV. The stuff that censors freak out about. The stuff that makes ten year old kids set themselves on fire 'cause they saw it on Saturday morning cartoons. I guess I'm not a violent guy. Although, I have looked at cartoons on Saturday morning and thought: "That is so cool. If only I could

slam into the side of a mountain at a hundred miles an hour and have all my body parts spring back to life. I could make a lot of money doing that.” But I digress. High School is a game, right? Play the game, keep your head out of a toilet, it’s all good. I think guys have it way worse than girls. A nerdy guy against someone like Brawn doesn’t stand a chance. Or fat guys. It’s always easy to kick a fat guy when he’s down. Not that I’m fat. I’m just gastronomically challenged.

BELLY joins BEAKER at the table. The focus shifts to BITTER, BRAWN and BEAUTY.

BRAWN: You can do that?

BITTER: Oh sure. We’ll rewind the play and that little incident will be wiped from their memory. The audience won’t remember a thing.

BRAWN: OK. If you can do that, I’ll stay.

BITTER: Would I lie to you? It’ll be fine.

BEAUTY: ‘Cause I don’t sleep around.

BITTER: Of course you don’t.

BEAUTY: That’s not a nice thing to say.

BITTER: *(aside)* ‘Cause Frankenstein is the Nobel Peace Prize of things to say.

BEAUTY: What was that?

BITTER: Nothing. Shall we adjourn to the Home-Ec class?

A bell rings. All five are back in the Home-Ec class darning socks except for BRAWN, who’s reading a Sports Illustrated magazine.

BELLY: Socks. Our Ms. Fine is very obsessed with socks. We should all know what to do with our socks. What do socks have to do with the real world?

BEAUTY: They have everything to do with the real world. When you get holes in your socks are you going to buy new ones? No. You’ll darn them.

BELLY: I’ll get my mother to darn them.

BITTER: What if your mother’s dead?

BEAUTY: Don’t be so morbid.

BELLY: I'm going to be a millionaire comedian. I'll employ a lackey to darn my socks.

BITTER: Why not buy new ones then, millionaire?

BELLY: What do you think I'm made of, money? Maybe I'll become a puppeteer. A sock puppeteer. (*he puts the socks on his hand*) Hello everybody. How is everybody today? (*there is no answer*) I guess everybody sucks today. Everybody's all cranky and sucky. Must be because of the locker search. (*lowers voice with echo*) Locker search, earch, earch.

BEAUTY: I hate it when people go through my stuff.

BELLY: That freshman kid brings a butter knife for her lunch and Mr. Mann's on the rampage. (*imitating the principal*) All students will reveal the contents of their lockers immediately. Zero tolerance. No exceptions.

BEAUTY: What's she going to do with a butter knife?

BELLY: Butter you to death, of course. (*with the sock*) Not the jelly! Not the jelly!

BEAUTY: But it's a butter knife. It doesn't even have an edge.

BELLY: (*still using the sock puppet*) Zero tolerance. No exceptions. No edge. Suspension? No problem.

BEAUTY: Mr. Mann didn't suspend her did he?

BELLY: Yep.

BITTER: You know all the dirty little secrets don't you.

BELLY: Dirty little secrets are my specialty.

Carnival music plays, or conversely something that sounds like tabloid television music. BELLY comes forward to address the audience in a carnival barker/ TV talk show host manner. The others freeze in a pose of surprise as if shocked about finding something out.

BELLY: Here at Jefferson High School it's not the surface world of student life that fascinates, but what goes on underneath. Show us your underbelly!

THE OTHERS: Ooooooh. (*they all change their pose*)

BELLY: On the surface it's easy pickin's – Look! There's a jock! You must be athletic and in shape.

THE OTHERS: Oh! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: You're overweight! You must be a lazy slob with no self-control!

THE OTHERS: Ah! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: You're Asian. You must be quiet and abnormally intelligent!

THE OTHERS: Eek! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: You look strange. Therefore you must be strange!

THE OTHERS: Ooooooooooh! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: You're a cheerleader.

BEAUTY: And beautiful.

BELLY: And beautiful. You must be perfect in every way!

THE OTHERS: Hooray!

BELLY: But as the saying goes – you can't tell a book by its cover.

THE OTHERS: (*cheerfully and robotically*) Yes you can.

BELLY: No you can't.

THE OTHERS: (*cheerfully and robotically*) Sure you can!

BELLY: (*losing the talk show veneer*) No you can't, you morons. We're not labels, we're flesh and blood. That's the whole stinking point!

BRAWN: Did you just call me a moron?

BELLY: (*regaining the talk show veneer*) I think we're off track. Back to the dirty little secrets.

THE OTHERS: Hooray! (*they go back to their poses of surprise*)

BELLY: It's so easy to say you're this and that hmmm? But what would you say if I told you this woman (*pointing at BITTER*) comes from a divorced home. She's used as a ping-pong ball between her parents and has decided never to marry!

THE OTHERS: Shocking! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: And this woman – (*points to BEAUTY*) has begun throwing up after meals! Just to maintain her girlish figure! So the boys will like her better!

THE OTHERS: Shocking! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: And this woman (*points to BEAKER*) has a secret obsession with... (*he pauses and then whispers*) Country and Western music. She even line dances!

THE OTHERS: Shocking! (*they change their pose*) Gasp! (*they change their pose*) Horrors! (*they change their pose*)

BELLY: And this man (*points at BRAWN*) is getting a scholarship.

BEAUTY: We know that!

BELLY: But why does he want that scholarship?

BEAKER: To play football stupid!

BELLY: But why does he need that scholarship?

The girls look at each other and shrug.

GIRLS: We have no idea!

BELLY: How 'bout it Brawny?

BRAWN: Don't look at me!

GIRLS: Aw he's not talking.

BELLY: Come 'ere. (*he gestures the girls downstage*) He needs his scholarship bad so he can get out of here. Get out of town. He knows deep down inside that he is just like dear old dad.

GIRLS: (*whispering*) I hear his dad hits the bottle. And his mom.

BELLY: It's like a poison. And Brawny keeps getting sick.

BEAUTY: He gave Robin Peterson a black eye.

BELLY: The black eye is his specialty!

BEAUTY: But Brawn said it was an accident and we got her kicked off the cheerleading squad!

BEAKER & BITTER: Hooray!

BELLY: So Brawny doesn't know what to do. All Brawn no brains after all! But he knows if he leaves he'll be safe. Safe from the poison. He might make it out alive.

THE GIRLS: He might make it out alive! Hooray!

BITTER: Kind sir, you know so much. You must be a genius!

BEAKER: These are deep, dark secrets. The deepest and the darkest!

BEAUTY: However did you know?

BELLY: I never reveal my sources.

BRAWN: (*grabbing BELLY*) I'm not so keen on people spilling my secrets.

BELLY: Sir, you make an excellent argument. The writer told me. You think I could figure this out all on my own?

THE OTHERS: Ohhhh. The writer!

BELLY: (*to audience*) Could you tell just by looking what their secrets are? Should dirty little secrets stay underground? What happens when you tell the truth? What happens in the hallways when people know the truth?

BITTER: (*breaking out of pose*) What happens when you free yourself from living a lie? What happens when you live your life the way you want to and not the way other people say you should. Huh? What do you think about that?

BELLY: That, my dear, is a whole other show.

The music stops and BELLY joins the others. They resume their normal behaviour.

BEAUTY: What secrets could you possibly know?

BELLY: Only the shadow knows.

BEAUTY: You don't know anything.

BITTER: What secrets do you know?

BEAUTY: Like I'm going to tell you.

BELLY: (*sticking the puppet in BEAKER's face*) Did they find anything in your locker hmm? Nah. What do you got – Books? Booooring. (*to BITTER*) Now you. You, I imagine, would have lots of very interesting things in your locker.

BITTER: Why?

BELLY: You listen to thrash, don't ya? Don't you cut yourself? Worship Satan? Dance for the devil in the moonlight? I'll bet you have fascinating things in your locker.

BITTER: What I have in my locker is none of your... why am I talking to a sock?

BEAUTY: (*to BITTER*) So did they?

BITTER: Did they what?

BEAUTY: Find anything interesting in your locker.

BITTER: (*referring to BELLY*) Why don't you ask him? He knows everything.

BELLY: (*still with the sock to BEAUTY*) You probably have too much make-up in yours to have any room for knives or guns or paperclips.

BEAUTY: Shut up freak.

BELLY: (*to BRAWN*) And you... I bet I know exactly what's in your locker.

BRAWN: You do, huh?

BELLY: I'll bet a hundred million trillion dollars I know what's in your locker.

BRAWN: Since you don't have a hundred million trillion dollars why would I care?

BELLY: True. Very true. But for the good of the class I'll continue. I'll bet you a hundred million trillion dollars I know what's in your locker.

BRAWN: And what's that belly boy?

BELLY: Nothing. There ain't one thing in your locker. No books, no papers, no pens, no binders, nothing.

BEAKER: Why would you say that?

BELLY: He never does any work. I have three classes with Brawn and all he does is sit in the back of the class and read magazines. And nobody bothers him and nobody questions him and the teachers certainly don't say anything to our Jefferson superstar. I'll bet he won't even write those County-wide tests next week.

BEAKER: Everybody has to write those tests.

BELLY: Everybody is not Brawn.

BRAWN: Damn straight.

BEAKER: But everyone has to write them. You have to write them.

BRAWN: Uh huh.

BELLY: But he doesn't have to pass them. (*with sock at BRAWN*) Isn't that right, Brawny?

BRAWN: Get out of my face.

BEAKER: But everybody does. Everybody does. Everyone has to do their work. Everyone has to write the County tests. Everyone has to do their SAT's. You have to.

BRAWN: Coach's got it all figured out.

BITTER: In what way?

BRAWN: I don't know. Coach's taking care of it.

BEAKER: But everyone has to... Everyone has to...

BELLY: Ah, Coach is taking care of it. Why don't I have a coach?

BITTER: You know, that's probably something you shouldn't be talking about, out loud.

BELLY: I would get my coach to take out the garbage.

BITTER: People might get upset.

BEAKER: I've been doing extra studying for those tests. It's not fair. You just can't...

BRAWN: (*standing up*) And what are you going to do about it?

BEAKER: Nothing. Sorry.

BRAWN: (*to BITTER*) And you? You wanna say something?

BITTER: (*pause*) No.

BRAWN: (*to BELLY*) What about you?

BELLY: Me? I'm just sitting here. Another day, another sock.

BRAWN: Exactly.

BRAWN slams his hands on the table. He turns to the audience.

BRAWN: High School is all about power. Who has it and who doesn't.

The rest stand and slam their hands on the table.

BITTER: Why did I say that? He pushed and I folded like a house of cards. I'm not afraid of him.

BELLY: I'm afraid of him. He scares me to death. I'm a walking corpse.

They slam their hands on the table.

BEAUTY: I'm not afraid to admit it. I like having power. I deserve it.

They slam their hands on the table.

BEAKER: Nothing? Nothing. That's all anybody ever does is nothing.

They slam their hands on the table.

BITTER: Nothing.

BRAWN: Nothing.

They slam their hands on the table.

BEAKER: Nothing. Nothing. Nothing!

They all break away from the table. Moving in fast frustrated circles.

BEAKER: Sometimes I just want to do something. Break something.

BRAWN: Something...

BELLY: Something bad.

BEAKER: Shoot the smug look off their faces.

BITTER: Something pow!

BEAUTY: Something fierce.

BEAKER: 'Cause I can't take this anymore and I want to...

BRAWN: Do something.

BEAKER: 'Cause it's not fair. This is not fair!

BRAWN: It's not violence, is it?

BELLY: It's just something.

BITTER: Something out there.

BEAUTY: Something to relieve the tension.

BEAKER: 'Cause if I don't do something I might break.

BRAWN: I'm gonna break.

BELLY: I'm just gonna break.

BEAKER: I think about making people suffer.

BELLY: Shoot the smug smiles off their faces.

They all jump up and down and scream. In unison, they suddenly sit back at the table and resume the previous scene.

BRAWN: (*standing up*) And what are you going to do about it?

BEAKER: Nothing. Sorry.

BRAWN: (*to BITTER*) And you? You wanna say something?

BITTER: (*pause*) No.

BRAWN: (*to BELLY*) What about you?

BELLY: Me? I'm just sitting here. Another day, another sock.

BRAWN: Exactly. You just mind your own business and everything will be just fine.

BEAKER: No. No. Not nothing. Not exactly. Not Nothing. Not Nothing. Not Nothing!

BEAUTY: What are you talking about?

BELLY: She's cracking...

BITTER: Are you going to say something?

BEAKER: (*she takes a deep breath and then plunges forward*) You have to have good grades to be on any sports team. How do you get good grades if you don't do the work? That's the rule right? That's the rule. There are supposed to be rules and you, you, you just break them and flaunt them like they don't matter, like nothing matters.

BEAUTY: What does it matter to you?

BEAKER: It matters to me because I work. I work hard. I do my work and nobody seems to care. I work hard and I get teased for it and blamed for it like I've done something wrong when all I want to do is get a good grade! What is wrong with that? Why is that so wrong like my skin is so wrong like my clothes are so wrong like everything with me is so wrong!

BELLY: Easy girl, you're headed for cuckoo territory.

BEAKER: I hate this. I hate this school. I hate this life. I hate this world. I hate you. I hate all of you.

BRAWN: You better be careful, China girl.

BEAKER: Korean. I'm Korean.

BRAWN: Whatever. I could report you to the principal. Words of violence and all that. Zero tolerance.

BEAKER: Zero tolerance? (*she laughs*) Zero tolerance. Where is there zero tolerance? He suspends a girl for a butter knife? Where is there zero tolerance for me? Is he there in the halls? Is he in the bathrooms? The change rooms? He's nowhere. (*she packs up her stuff*)

BITTER: Where are you going?

BEAKER: Somewhere. Not here. I can't be here. I can't be here anymore 'cause all I want to... want to... (*she gives a scream of frustration*)

They all slam their hands on the table. They all get up and move in frustrated circles.

BEAKER: Sometimes I just want to do something.

BELLY: Something bad.

BEAKER: Shoot the smug look off their faces.

BRAWN: It's not violence, is it?

BELLY: It's just something.

BITTER: Something out there.

BEAUTY: Something to relieve the tension.

BEAKER: 'Cause if I don't do something I might break.

BRAWN: I'm gonna break.

BELLY: I'm just gonna break.

BEAKER: I think about making people suffer.

BELLY: Shoot the smug smile off their faces.

BEAKER: But I know I never will. (*everyone freezes.*) I know I never will. Does that make me a coward or strong?

BELLY: All I want is...

BITTER: What I want...

BEAUTY: The thing that I...

BRAWN: What I really want is...

BEAKER: Do you know what I want? Power. I want power. Just once. I want to be the one in power. I want to...

BITTER: In the hallway.

BELLY: Empty or full.

BRAWN: Doesn't matter.

BEAKER: I want to walk down the hallway and just go from class to class.

BEAUTY: Is the hallway...

BITTER: ...just a means...

BRAWN: ...to get from one class to another?

BEAKER: Power. It's all about power. It shouldn't be. I'm only sixteen years old. I'm supposed to have my whole life ahead of me and I have to deal with this crap every day. It's not enough to get out of bed and do my schoolwork and be a good person. It's not enough. I have to deal with power and the fact that I have no power. Am I supposed to know this? Am I supposed to have a crap life because I have no power? Just once. Just once. Is it so wrong that for once in my life I want POOOOOWEEEEER!

Warning bells go off. The other four bring BEAKER downstage. They act as impersonal guards.

BELLY: Warning. Warning.

BRAWN: She's freaking out.

BEAUTY: She's going to snap.

BEAKER: Let go of me!

BITTER: She's exhibiting all the classic warning signs.

BRAWN: Poor anger management.

BEAUTY: Mental breakdown.

BELLY: Racial discrimination.

BITTER: She must be affected by media portrayals of sex and violence.

BEAUTY: Her grades must be plummeting.

BELLY: Do you feel rejected?

BITTER: Picked on?

BEAUTY: Isolated?

BRAWN: Alone?

BEAKER: Let go of me.

BELLY: She's gonna blow.

BEAUTY: Snap.

BITTER: Bring a gun to school.

BRAWN: Kill us all.

BELLY: It's her. It's her. She's the one. She's the one who does it.

BEAKER: I didn't do anything.

BEAUTY: It's her!

BRAWN: It's her!

BELLY: The play's over! We can now reveal the loser who goes psycho.

ALL: (except BEAKER) It's her!

BEAKER: It's not me! It's not me. Look at me. Do I look like I would...
that I would... I never would.

BEAUTY: How do we know that?

BEAKER: I guess you don't. 'Cause you don't know me. Do you. Do
you? (she runs off)

BITTER: Hey! Wait up a second!

BITTER follows BEAKER. BRAWN heads off in the other direction. BEAUTY comes downstage to talk to the audience. BELLY watches her.

BEAUTY: What is violence? What is violence? What is violence. What
is violence. What is violence. What is... I feel like I'm writing a
paper! Nobody said this play was going to be hard with questions
and stuff.

BELLY: Stop, stop, stop. You are doing a disservice to educational
theatre everywhere.

BEAUTY: What?

BELLY: You're not helping.

BEAUTY: Well what am I supposed to say? If I don't know anything about violence, I don't know anything about violence. I can't say I know something when I don't.

BELLY: How can you not know anything? Don't you read the paper? Watch the news?

BEAUTY: No. The news is depressing.

BELLY: Of course it is. Better just to ignore the world, let it trundle on without you.

BEAUTY: (*not hearing his sarcasm*) Exactly.

BELLY: Right. Still, your completely vacant brain matter doesn't help the play. I think we're going to have to travel to the world of suspended disbelief (*echo*) elief, elief, elief.

BEAUTY: What?

BELLY: Step outside the box.

BEAUTY: I don't want to step outside the box. I like my box.

BELLY: Come on, do it for the kids.

BEAUTY: I don't care about the kids. I like my box.

BELLY: You can do it. Just for a second. Do it for the theatre.

BEAUTY: Who'll be inside the box when I'm outside the box?

BELLY: I will.

BEAUTY: Get serious.

BELLY: It won't be hard you only say five things. I'm pretty. You're a freak. Cheerleading rocks!

BEAUTY: That's only three things.

BELLY: I'll improvise. Come on. Out you go.

BEAUTY: Oh... fine. Let's get it over with.

BELLY: One, two, three.

BEAUTY jumps towards BELLY. BELLY jumps towards her as if they were switching places. BELLY freezes in a pose that imitates BEAUTY. BEAUTY appears to become a mature woman.

BEAUTY: (*looking at BELLY*) Is that what I really look like?

BELLY: (*imitating BEAUTY*) I'm pretty. You're a freak. Cheerleading rocks!

BEAUTY: The less said about that the better. (*she turns back to the audience*) I was telling the truth. I don't know a lot about violence. I have a pretty happy easy life. My parents adore me; I'm an only child so I don't have any siblings to fight with. I don't read the papers and I don't watch the news. In my little world, life is good, school is good and I don't ever think about why that is. If someone is having troubles it's their fault, it certainly isn't mine. Maybe life should be more difficult. Maybe the real world wouldn't be so difficult if High School hadn't been so easy. I don't know. What's worse – physical scars or emotional ones? What's harder to bear? Twenty years from now I'm going to have a daughter in High School. And she's going to be smart and beautiful and play the piano like a dream. And she's going to bring home a letter she finds taped to her locker calling her a smelly dyke. She's not going to say much, but she's going to say it was maybe written by some popular girls. Cheerleaders, maybe. Like me. If I had been there I might have written that letter. I did write that letter.

BELLY: Are you done?

BEAUTY: I'm done.

BELLY: Ok back you go. One, two three.

They switch places again.

BELLY: So how was it outside the box? Did you see your future?

BEAUTY: I don't know. I don't remember a thing.

BELLY: It probably doesn't matter – people like you never change. (*turns and walks away*)

BEAUTY: Thank God for that.

A gunshot is heard. BITTER runs on and pulls BEAUTY to the side.

BEAUTY: What is it, what's the matter?

BITTER: I don't have time to explain. Go pull the fire alarm.

BEAUTY: Why? I'll get in trouble.

BITTER: Just do it!

BEAUTY: What was that?

BITTER: Get out of here. Now! Now!

The fire alarm sounds. Everyone comes running onstage from different directions. There is the sound of a gunshot. Everyone throws their arms over their heads. The fire alarm cuts off. The five stand up straight and look at the audience.

BELLY: So here we are. The end.

BEAUTY: Is it?

BELLY: Pretty near.

BRAWN: Really?

BEAKER: It can't be.

BITTER: It happened so quickly.

BELLY: I have a question.

BITTER: Which is?

BELLY: So who did it? Which one of us?

BEAKER: It's not me. I was telling the truth.

BRAWN: It's not me. Why would I lie?

BEAUTY: It's not me. Can you seriously see me holding a gun?

BELLY: It's not me. I'm too funny to be a murderer.

BITTER: It's not me because... well it's not.

BELLY: That was convincing.

BITTER: I don't have anything else to say. Either you believe me or you don't.

BEAUTY: It could be her.

BITTER: It could be any one of us.

BEAKER: Is it now?

BRAWN: Is it time?

BELLY: Not yet.

BEAUTY: It can't be time.

BITTER: I'm not ready.

BRAWN: (to audience) Do you know what happened?

BELLY: What did happen?

BEAKER: Has it been exaggerated?

BEAUTY: Are we telling the truth?

BITTER: Are we lying?

BEAUTY: It had to be violent. Right?

BRAWN: It had to be a confrontation. Right?

ALL: It had to be. Had to be.

BELLY: Hot, hard, pow, explosive.

BEAKER: Someone who couldn't take it anymore.

BITTER: It had to be on purpose. Cold, calculated.

BRAWN: That's the way teen violence works, right?

ALL: Hot, hard, pow, explosive!

BELLY: Were you there?

BEAUTY: It was awful.

BRAWN: I was there.

BEAKER: It was terrifying.

BELLY: Shots everywhere.

BITTER: Everyone under tables.

BEAUTY: Shots without consequence.

ALL: It had to be, had to be. Right?

BRAWN: Someone snapped, out of control.

BEAUTY: An outsider.

BEAKER: Someone who couldn't take it anymore.

BELLY: Someone who wears a lot of black.

BITTER: And listens to the devil's music.

BRAWN: The wrong music.

ALL: Because people who listen to the right music never resort to violence.

BELLY: Right?

ALL: Right.

BITTER: 'Cause violence is always Hot. Hard. Pow. Explosive!

ALL: HOT, HARD, POW, EXPLOSIVE.

BELLY, BEAUTY and BRAWN run offstage. BEAKER is left downstage with BITTER watching.

BEAKER: HOT, HARD, POW EXPLOSIVE.

BITTER: *(interrupting)* So get power.

BEAKER: *(whirling around as if surprised)* Huh? Who's there! *(reverting back to her withdrawn self)* Oh. Sorry.

BEAKER tries to walk past BITTER who doesn't let her by.

BITTER: No, no, no. You can't do that, hide behind that shell now. You broke out. You yelled. Now you're out and walking around, you can't go back.

BEAKER: I don't know what you're talking about.

BITTER: You want power. So get it.

BEAKER: Get it huh. Just like that. Poof.

BITTER: Sure.

BEAKER: Hah! Where do I get power? I'm not a football star or a beauty queen.

BITTER: You don't need their power. You'll never have their power. Get your own.

BEAKER: I can't fight back.

BITTER: Did I say fight back?

BEAKER: You said, you said before I should do something. "You can let them make you think you're dirt or you can do something about it."

BITTER: Yeah. Do something for you.



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