



**Sample Pages from
The Redemption of Gertie Greene**

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THE REDEMPTION OF GERTIE GREENE

A DRAMEDY BY
Taryn Temple



The Redemption of Gertie Greene
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Characters

4W 4M + 8 Any Gender, Easily Expandable

GERTIE GREENE: Female. The new kid in school, rumored to be a terrible bully.

MRS. FILLMORE: Any gender. The drama teacher, kind, good-humored, and energetic.

CURT: Male. Loves drama class but wishes he was good at sports to please his dad.

NICOLE: Female. Quiet and shy, drama class is her chance to finally come out of her shell.

ALEX: Any gender. Struggles in school, drama class is her only escape.

RACHEL: Female. Outgoing, spirited, the kind of person you'd want to have as a friend.

SHANNON: Any gender. The queen of sarcasm.

JESSIE: Any gender. Often caught up in gossip.

JACOB: Male. Energetic and enthusiastic.

C.J.: Male. An over-the-top dude who doesn't always pay attention in class.

JEFF: Male. A theater enthusiast, tries to keep the other guys on track.

ANNA: Any gender. Nerdy, over-eager, always has her hand in the air, oblivious to social dynamics.

BRYAN: Any gender. The class joker, has a pun for everything.

CASEY: Any gender. Fun and reliable friend, the music expert of drama class.

BETH: Female. Drama class student who is game to try anything.

REBECCA: Any gender. The fashionista of the group.

Additional Characters

(Can be double-cast using the actors that play the characters above)

FOOTBALL JOCKS 1-4

MRS. HINCKLEBRICK: Any gender. The cruel history teacher.

MRS. CRANBERRY: Any gender. The bubbly school counselor.

PETE MACKLESON: Male. The popular guy with a dark side.

GOSSIPERS 1-7

PIGS 1-3: Must be double-cast from actors who play students in drama class

Casting Notes

Characters labeled as “Any Gender” are written with specific genders in the script. Feel free to adjust their names and pronouns as needed.

For a smaller cast, several students may be combined into one part. For a larger cast, add more students and distribute student lines among the extra actors.

Additional characters can be double-cast from actors playing the principal roles. You don’t need to match the script’s gender for these roles. For example, in the original production, most of the Football Players were girls wearing backward hats, and Mrs. Hinklebrick was played by a boy in a wig and dress.

Setting

The present day in school.

Production Notes

“Middle school” may be changed to “junior high,” “high school,” etc. The play takes place primarily in Mrs. Fillmore’s drama classroom. The other locations in the school can be suggested with simple lighting changes or the characters onstage adding/moving a few set pieces to indicate a different place. Mrs. Fillmore’s drama classroom should contain a prop box and costume rack so actors can quickly grab props and add simple costume pieces while onstage to transform into the additional characters.

Any pop culture references in the production may be adapted to suit the time or location in which the play is being performed.

First Production

The Redemption of Gertie Greene was first performed on July 25, 2014 by the Take Two Players at Topeka Civic Theatre in Topeka, Kansas, directed by Taryn Temple. The cast was as follows:

GERTIE GREENE: Laura Bearse

MR. FILLMORE: Drew Hodgkinson

CURT, PETE MACKLESON, PIG 2: Riley Champney

NICOLE: Kaitlyn Rawlings

ALEX, GOSSIPER: Gwen Appenfeller

RACHEL, GOSSIPER: Haley Piper

SHANNON, FOOTBALL JOCK, GOSSIPER: Kassy Marable

JESSIE, GOSSIPER: Lea Ramos

JACOB, FOOTBALL JOCK: Trenton Wagner

C.J., FOOTBALL JOCK, MRS. HINKLEBRICK: Jason Schroeder

JANE (JEFF), GOSSIPER: Ally Swart

ANNA, GOSSIPER: Madison King

BRYAN, FOOTBALL JOCK, PIG 1: Tate Donohue

CASEY, PIG 3: Ann Beall

BETH, MRS. CRANBERRY: Kara McClendon

REBECCA, GOSSIPER: Zorina Swart

ASSISTANT DIRECTOR: Gregory Richardson

CHOREOGRAPHER: Melanie Remp

LIGHTING DESIGN: Brenda Blackman

TECHNICAL ASSISTANCE: The Technical Theatre
Campers

*A special thanks to the Take Two Players,
who courageously brought this script to life,
and to my parents, who cheer enthusiastically
for all of my ideas.*

Lights come up as the STUDENTS enter and speak to the audience.

RACHEL: No one ever tells you how tough middle school is going to be.

SHANNON: The pimples.

JESSIE: The cliques.

BRYAN: The hormones.

ANNA: The smelly boys.

JEFF: The terrifying girls!

NICOLE: The gossip.

CURT: Getting picked last in gym class every single day.

CASEY: Trying not to look like a huge dork all the time.

Everyone looks at ALEX.

ALEX: Feeling like everyone is watching you every single minute, waiting for you to mess up so they can make fun of you.

Everyone laughs and points at ALEX.

RACHEL: The uncertainty.

BETH: Not knowing how tall you're going to be...

JACOB: *(his voice squeaks as he speaks)* Or how your voice will sound when you open your mouth...

REBECCA: Or if your clothes will be out of style next week.

NICOLE: Or who is going to be your friend tomorrow. *(several girls whisper and point at NICOLE)* Or even today!

CURT: Figuring out the kind of person you want to be...

C.J.: Without ruining your cool reputation.

ALL: Ugh!

REBECCA: Middle school would have been terrifying enough just dealing with all of that.

JEFF: But we had to face something even more frightening.

CASEY: Or should we say someone.

ALL: Gertie Greene!

JESSIE: Gertie Greene was the meanest girl in school!

JACOB: No one knew exactly where she came from. Some say it was jail. Others swear she hitched a ride into town with a motorcycle gang. And someone even claimed she was from Missouri!

STUDENTS gasp. Feel free to replace with your own cultural reference. GERTIE stomps onstage, looking angry and mean.

C.J.: Wherever she came from, Gertie Greene just appeared one day, out of the mists of evil, and started terrorizing our school.

STUDENTS move into positions to pantomime the following scenes as they are being described. The pantomimes should be in slow motion, greatly exaggerated, almost cartoonish.

SHANNON: (as GERTIE pantomimes knocking down a football team) She knocked down the entire football team in one fell swoop!

BETH: Even the teachers were scared of her because she overturned Mrs. Hinklebrick's desk after class!

GERTIE overturns an imaginary desk in front of MRS. HINKLEBRICK.

RACHEL: And she punched Pete Mackleson right in the face!

GERTIE pantomimes punching PETE in the face.

REBECCA: She wore weird clothes.

ANNA: She never smiled.

C.J.: And she was huge, dude! She towered over us, ready to stomp us to bits with one of her gigantic feet if we got in her way! (Or "Sure, Gertie Greene wasn't big, but what she lacked in size she made up for in pure, terrifying strength.") She could twist your arm until your bones would break!

JEFF: Not that we ever saw her do that...

JACOB: But she made it very clear that she could if she wanted to!

BRYAN: The one place we were safe from the rampages of "Mean, Mean Gertie Greene" was in drama class.

STUDENTS disperse around the stage and settle into the drama classroom.

CASEY: We knew she wouldn't touch that class with a 10-foot pole.

GERTIE looks disgusted and stomps off.

RACHEL: And we were truly thankful.

MRS. FILLMORE: (*entering energetically*) Okay, students, welcome to class! Glad to see you all here. To warm up today, you'll each draw the title of a famous musical from... (*with a flourish she takes a strange hat off of her head*)... this hat and pantomime it for the class to guess.

JESSIE: That's Mrs. Fillmore, our drama teacher.

SHANNON: She's crazy!

JESSIE and SHANNON join the class.

MRS. FILLMORE: Any volunteers? (*ANNA jumps to her feet, waving her hand in the air and bouncing up and down while JEFF simply raises his hand*) Jeff, start us off.

ANNA does a huge "Aw, shucks!" gesture and sits down. JEFF draws a title. First he acts like a ghost, then like an opera singer.

ANNA: *The Sound of Music?*

JEFF shakes his head no.

CASEY: *Oklahoma?*

JEFF shakes his head no frustratedly, then repeats the pantomime bigger, adding "Woooo" sounds for the ghost and a long, operatic note for the opera singer.

SHANNON: Oh, I've got it! *The Phantom of the Opera!*

JEFF gives her a smile and a big thumbs up.

BRYAN: I'm afraid I didn't have a ghostly chance of guessing that one!
(*laughs at his pun while the rest of the class roll their eyes or groan good-naturedly*)

MRS. FILLMORE: Shannon, since you guessed correctly it's your turn.

SHANNON: Oh man, do I have to?

MRS. FILLMORE: Do I have to answer that?

SHANNON: Fine. *(she draws a title, then unenthusiastically grooms herself like a cat)* Lick, lick.

CASEY, REBECCA, JESSIE, & CURT: *Cats!*

MRS. FILLMORE: Good. Why don't you all do one together?

They draw their title. The boys strike tough dude poses while the girls act like dolls.

ANNA: *Pirates of Penzance?*

BETH: *Babes in Toyland?*

Nope. The guys strike another manly pose while the girls start stiffly walking forward with maniacal smiles saying "Mama."

C.J.: Dude, whatever it is, it is creepy!

RACHEL: Oh oh oh! *(clearly pointing at each group of actors as she says it)* Guys and Dolls! *(The acting group celebrates together as RACHEL stands up, ready to perform. She draws a title.)* Alex, come help me out! Kneel right here.

RACHEL has ALEX kneel, then moves her arms so they form the point of a roof. Next RACHEL props one foot up on ALEX's shoulder and begins playing an imaginary violin, complete with terrible screeching noises.

NICOLE: *Fiddler on the Roof!* *(she stands up to draw a title. As she does so she realizes it's her turn and gets self-conscious)* Oh, umm... Okay...

She makes a quick motion over her head that no one catches, then stands still. STUDENTS look confused. We hear "huhs" and "whats."

MRS. FILLMORE: Try your pantomime again, Nicole, but slow it down a bit. *(NICOLE does the same motion slower, still nobody gets it)* Good, but now it's time to add more detail. What can you add to the action to help us establish a place or a scene?

NICOLE thinks for a minute, then the light bulb comes on. She puts on lipstick, picks up a brush and brushes her hair, then very obviously sets down the brush, picks up a bottle, and sprays her hairstyle while making a "shhhhh" sound.

REBECCA, SHANNON & RACHEL: *Hairspray!*

MRS. FILLMORE: Nice work, Nicole. Way to think on your feet. Girls, since you've already gone, why don't you choose someone else.

ANNA jumps up and down and raises her hand so energetically it seems she may come out of her own skin.

SHANNON: (*sarcastically*) Hmm, I can't tell... does Anna maybe want to go?

ANNA nods and claps, runs over to MRS. FILLMORE, and draws a title. She evily hunches over and cackles like a witch.

JESSIE & NICOLE: Wicked!

BETH: Darn it, I love that musical!

MRS. FILLMORE: Choose someone to go, Jessie.

JESSIE: I pick... Bryan.

BRYAN draws a title. He lets out a huge roar, then puts on an imaginary crown.

MOST OF THE CLASS: *The Lion King!*

BRYAN: You guys ain't lyin'!

Again, BRYAN laughs at his joke while the rest of the class rolls their eyes or groans good-naturedly.

MRS. FILLMORE: Oh my. Who's ready to go next?

JACOB, C.J. and BETH run forward and draw a title. After a quick whisper and a giggle BETH smiles and poses prettily while C.J. makes a horribly ugly face. JACOB deliberately points first to BETH, then to C.J.

REBECCA: *My Fair Lady?*

CASEY: *Mary Poppins?*

JEFF: *Les Misérables?*

BETH and C.J. shake their heads and pose with even more vigor, making slight noises.

JACOB: (*points first to BETH*) Aaaannnd... (*then points to C.J.*)

JESSIE: *The King and I!*

CURT: *Jekyll & Hyde?*

No. They pose even more enthusiastically with even more noises.

JACOB: *(Points even more energetically to each one. Louder.)* Aaaannnd...

RACHEL: Oh, I got this. You guys are hilarious. *(pointing at each person with JACOB as she says it)* Beauty aaaannnd the Beast!

There is much celebration, the STUDENTS laugh.

MRS. FILLMORE: Excellent work, everyone. Very inspired. *(she puts the hat aside)* Today we are going to continue our study of protagonists and antagonists with some improvised scenes.

C.J.: What the heck are protagonists and antagonists?

Most of the STUDENTS sigh and shake their heads.

MRS. FILLMORE: Who can help C.J. with his question?

Several hands go in the air, including JEFF's.

ANNA: Oh pick me, Mrs. Fillmore! Me me me! I know what a protagonist is!

MRS. FILLMORE: Alright, Anna, take a breath. What is a protagonist?

ANNA: The protagonist is the main character in the story.

MRS. FILLMORE: Good. Give me more.

ANNA: The audience should care about the protagonist. They should want them to succeed.

MRS. FILLMORE: Exactly. Brilliant answer, Anna. And Jeff? The antagonist?

JEFF: The antagonist creates obstacles the protagonist must overcome.

SHANNON: Yeah, like C.J. antagonizes the class with his stupid questions.

MRS. FILLMORE: C.J.'s question was not stupid. It was a great opportunity for review! In fact, I told him to ask that question to make sure you all knew your stuff. *(Everyone knows this isn't true, but they play along, ad libbing "Right, right, sure you did," etc.)* All right, who would like to start? *(several hands in the air)* Beth and Rachel, start us off. Beth will express a desire for something, and Rachel, you will create the obstacles. *(they nod and come forward)*

BETH: (*Thinks for a few seconds, then gets an idea. She dramatically clasps her hands and swoons.*) Oh my, lunchtime is nearly over and I need to use the restroom.

RACHEL is confused so BETH whispers in her ear. RACHEL nods, laughs, and becomes an evil witch.

RACHEL: Well you can't, muah ha ha haaaaa!

BETH: But please, good madame, I need to tinkle!

The class giggles. They are engaged in the scene.

RACHEL: Too bad for you. I am the guardian of the girls' bathroom. I stay in here all lunch cooking my witch's brew and casting spells on little, wormy sixth graders. No one may pass!

BETH: (*clenching her legs together*) Oh my, I really don't want to have to change my pants!

RACHEL: You should change them; your pants are too normal. You should wear weird clothes like mine! (*BETH desperately makes a run for the "door" and RACHEL catches her by the arm*) Just where do you think you're going, ugly runt?

BETH: Please let me in or my tiny bladder will explode!

RACHEL: Better an exploded bladder than a broken face! (*throws BETH on the ground and BETH cowers dramatically*) Muah ha ha haaaaa! (*Bows her head, drops the character. Dramatically.*) And scene. (*BETH pops to her feet as the class applauds*)

MRS. FILLMORE: All right. Those were... interesting choices. Class, who was the protagonist and what did she want?

Several hands go up but ANNA answers before MRS. FILLMORE can call on anyone.

ANNA: It was Beth, and she wanted to use the bathroom.

MRS. FILLMORE: Yes. Correct. And who was the antagonist?

THE CLASS: Gertie Greene!

Everyone but CURT, ALEX, and NICOLE laugh and clap as RACHEL bows at her successful portrayal.

MRS. FILLMORE: Who?

JESSIE: Rachel was playing Gertie Greene. She's this new, scary girl that camps out in the bathroom every lunchtime.

BETH: Yeah, all of us are afraid to go in there.

REBECCA: Who knows what she's doing in there. She's so weird.

MRS. FILLMORE: Hmmm. She sounds like a very lonely person. Imagine spending your entire lunch alone in a bathroom. Have any of you asked her to sit with you at lunch?

CASEY: No way! She's a freak!

REBECCA: She wears the strangest clothes!

JACOB: And she would probably punch us in the face if we didn't give her all of our food!

The class laughs except for CURT, ALEX and NICOLE, who do not join in with the rest of the class' laughter or comments about GERTIE.

MRS. FILLMORE: I'm disappointed in you all. Why don't you try to be kind to her?

JEFF: You don't understand, Mrs. Fillmore. She's fearsome!

CASEY: She's intimidating!

BETH: She's scary. She'd beat us up!

JESSIE: She knocked down the entire football team!

CASEY: She overturned Mrs. Hinklebrick's desk! A teacher's desk!

BETH: And she punched Pete Mackleson in the face!

MRS. FILLMORE: (*thoughtfully*) Ahhh. I see. (*after a pause she moves on*) I guess we'll leave it there for now. Alright class, today let's get in groups and review basic dramatic structure. Find a partner who has the same favorite play or musical as you.

As the STUDENTS bustle around finding partners, the lights fade on the classroom but stay up on CURT. As CURT steps forward and narrates his scene, STUDENTS from the class put on costume pieces and act out what he is saying. The STUDENTS that are not in the scene stay onstage, quietly seated with their partner, and pantomime talking. They do not distract from or respond to CURT's scene.

CURT: I have a confession to make. I'm part of the reason everyone's scared of Gertie Greene. Let me explain. You know the rumor about how Gertie Greene knocked the whole football team to

the ground? Well, it's true. And I'm the reason she did it. It was the day after football auditions, I mean tryouts, and we were all anxiously waiting for the team roster to come out. (*several STUDENTS come forward to play stereotypical macho FOOTBALL JOCKS*) When they posted the list, big surprise, I wasn't on the team. When I didn't see my name on the list, I got really upset because I knew my dad was going to be really disappointed in me. Again. My face turned red and I felt like I was going to cry. That's when it started...

FOOTBALL JOCK 1: What, are you gonna cry, you big pansy?

FOOTBALL JOCK 2: Oh, look, little Curtsy-wurtsy didn't make the teamy-weemy. Poor baby.

FOOTBALL JOCK 3: As if you ever had a chance!

FOOTBALL JOCK 4: It would be an advantage for the other team if you played for us! You're terrible.

FOOTBALL JOCK 3: The fact that you even tried out is embarrassing. You can't play football. Everyone knows you're just a theater geek.

GERTIE enters and joins the scene, standing behind the football players and watching them without their knowledge. FOOTBALL JOCK 2 jumps up onto a bench.

FOOTBALL JOCK 2: Oh wook, I'm wittle Curtsy-wurtsy in drama class. Ooooo ooooo, I'm in a play!

FOOTBALL JOCK 4: (*jumps onto the bench and sings obnoxiously*) No, I'm the prince in a musical! Laaaaa laaaa laaaaa!

FOOTBALL JOCK 2: Make that the princess! (*they all crack up*)

FOOTBALL JOCK 3: (*also jumps onto the bench*) I like wearing tights. And makeup. And dancing!

CURT: (*to the FOOTBALL JOCKS*) Guys, stop it! Just leave me alone!

FOOTBALL JOCK 1 gets in CURT's face. He should be positioned directly in front of the three football players on the bench.

FOOTBALL JOCK 1: Oh shut up, wimp. Look, why don't you go back to drama class, put on a skirt, and do a play about it, you little fairy!

CURT: That's when Gertie Greene stepped in. Before they knew what had happened, she grabbed the bench and flung them all into a heap!

Be careful staging this! GERTIE grabs the bench and it looks like her muscles are straining. The STUDENTS jump off of the bench before GERTIE actually picks it up and moves it dramatically. FOOTBALL JOCKS 2-4 should fall on top of FOOTBALL JOCK 1 into a groaning heap.

GERTIE: *(standing menacingly in front of the pile of FOOTBALL JOCKS)* You guys say one more word to him and I'll knock you into next week. You understand? *(They look fearful and all rapidly nod yes. To CURT.)* You let me know if they give you any more trouble.

GERTIE stomps off after one more long, threatening look at the pile of FOOTBALL JOCKS. The FOOTBALL JOCKS get up and look at CURT. He feints toward them and they run away quickly back into the darker area of the stage where they remove their costume pieces and become the drama class STUDENTS again.

CURT: Those guys never came near me again. I just wish Gertie Greene could have been there when I told my dad I didn't make the team. Anyway, the rumor went around that Gertie Greene had taken down the entire football team. People were more scared of her than ever. And I never told anyone what really happened. I feel kinda bad about that.

As CURT goes back to sit with his partner, the lights go up on the rest of the class.

MRS. FILLMORE: All right, let's see how you did. In order to review basic dramatic structure, I'm going to pick two actors. They will create a scene together; each actor saying one sentence to illustrate each part of basic dramatic structure. Can I have two volunteers? *(many hands in the air)*

ANNA: Me, me, oh pick me! I want to do it!

MRS. FILLMORE: Jessie and Casey.

ANNA: Rats!

MRS. FILLMORE hands JESSIE a leafy tree branch and CASEY a huge ax.

MRS. FILLMORE: There are your props. All right, who knows the first element of basic dramatic structure?

ANNA: (*of course it's ANNA*) Me! I know it! (*she pops to her feet*)
Exposition introduces background information to the audience.

MRS. FILLMORE: Yes. Actors? (*after each element she points to the actors who quickly improvise their lines*)

JESSIE: I am a tall, strong tree.

CASEY: And I am a tall, strong woodcutter.

MRS. FILLMORE: What's next?

ANNA tries to answer every time, but this time it's BETH who pops to her feet.

BETH: Rising action! Conflicts develop, the tension rises.

MRS. FILLMORE points at the actors.

CASEY: I draw back my ax.

JESSIE: And I shiver with fear!

JEFF: Next is the climax! The climax is the turning point where the main character's fate changes.

CASEY: I swing my axe—

JESSIE: As I... (*Desperately thinks for a second. Then a triumphant idea!*)
...start to pelt the woodcutter with acorns!

REBECCA: Falling action is after the climax and it resolves the conflict.

CASEY: I run away in fear!

JESSIE: And I stretch my branches triumphantly in victory.

JACOB: (*mispronouncing*) Dénouement ties up the loose ends and concludes the story.

SHANNON: It's pronounced dey—noo—MAH, dummy.

MRS. FILLMORE shoots SHANNON a stern look.

CASEY: I have no wood to start a fire and keep myself warm, so I freeze to death in the cold, cold winter.

JESSIE: I don't care. I gently sway in the breeze and happily watch squirrels frolic in my branches.

JACOB pops up behind her and acts out squirrels frolicking in her branches while JESSIE gives a huge smile.

MRS. FILLMORE: (*laughing*) Fantastic! A round of applause for our actors, and for all of you. You have basic dramatic structure down cold! (*the class enthusiastically applauds as the school bell rings*) Great work today, everyone! See you tomorrow!

After bidding farewell to several STUDENTS, MRS. FILLMORE thoughtfully exits the stage. The rest of the STUDENTS set up Mrs. Hinklebrick's classroom as BRYAN, ALEX, JEFF, and BETH come forward to talk to the audience.

BRYAN: Mrs. Fillmore's drama class "filled" us with more joy than most of our other classes.

ALEX: And history was the worst!

JEFF: We all dreaded every day of history class with Mrs. Hinklebrick.

BETH: She was cruel and sarcastic, and if you didn't know the answers to her questions, watch out!

They rejoin the other STUDENTS who are sitting stiffly in perfectly straight rows. There is a very different feel onstage now than there was in the drama classroom.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*as she appears in the eyes of her STUDENTS – larger than life, calculating, sharp, and cruel*) All right, maggots, let's find out who didn't do their reading last night. (*turns suddenly to JEFF*) Where was Alexander the Great king?

JEFF: (*panicked*) Macedonia!

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*disappointed he knows the answer*) Yeeees. You! (*turns sharply to REBECCA*) Why was Alexander the Great famous?

REBECCA: (*worried she's going to get it wrong*) He, he, he was a brilliant military leader.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*disappointed again*) Correct. You! (*points suddenly at C.J.*) Who did Alexander the Great conquer?

C.J.: (*relaxed, shrugs*) I don't know.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: Ah-ha! Stupid idiot. You waste your time festering away in my class. Since you didn't do the reading, you can go straight to the office!

C.J.: But...

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: I said GO! (*Cowed, C.J. scurries offstage. She watches him go, giving an evil cackle. Suddenly, in the middle of her laugh.*) You! (*pointing at CASEY*) Who did he conquer?

CASEY: Persia!

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*rapid-fire, pointing at CURT*) When was he born?

CURT: 356 B.C.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*pointing at ANNA*) Where?

ANNA: Pella, the ancient capital of Macedonia.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*pointing at BRYAN*) Who was his father?

BRYAN: King Philip II. He was the second king to “fill up” Macedonia with—

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*cutting him off*) No jokes! (*pointing at SHANNON*) Who was his mother?

SHANNON: Olympias, the princess of Epirus.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: (*Pointing at ALEX with an expectant expression on her face. Speaking slowly and deliberately, as if laying a trap.*) And what was the name of his horse?

ALEX: Oh, um...

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: You don't know it?

ALEX: No, I do, I just—

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: Did somebody not do their reading last night?

ALEX: I did, I promise, I just can't think of the horse's name right now—

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: Hmm...

ALEX: (*standing up, getting desperate*) —but I read it, I did, I knew every single thing this morning.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: This is not the first time you've made this claim, Miss Jones. (*school bell rings*) See me after class.

All the other STUDENTS flee the room except ALEX, who is paralyzed in fright, and GERTIE, who starts to leave but then decides to stay and watch. MRS. HINKLEBRICK doesn't notice her.

From your first moments in this class, Alex, I have been dismally disappointed in your performance. I teach and I teach but you absorb nothing. Your grade is abysmal, your test scores are an embarrassment, and I don't think you can remember even one single historical fact. Let's see, shall we? Tell me, Alex. Tell me one little, teensy weensy historical fact. Anything. Come on.

ALEX is completely defeated. She's speechless. She cannot think of a single thing to say. She begins to cry. GERTIE takes a few steps toward her, but MRS. HINKLEBRICK still doesn't see her.

I thought so. What a waste. Someone should remove the tiny bit of brain that's in your head and give it to someone who can use it.

At this, GERTIE has had enough. She stomps over and violently overturns MRS. HINKLEBRICK's desk, then glares in her face.

MRS. HINKLEBRICK: Aaaaah! What in the name of...! You! (*pointing to GERTIE*) You will march yourself to the office right this moment, you horrible hooligan! (*GERTIE stomps offstage followed by a furious MRS. HINKLEBRICK, who continues to yell at her*) What terrible monsters we have at this school. You little brat! I'll make you pay for everything you've broken! If you think you can overturn my desk— (*etc., all the way offstage*)

ALEX: (*to the audience*) Gertie saved me. She really did. I was so shocked I didn't tell anyone what happened. Then the rumor went around school that Gertie got two days of in-school suspension for overturning Mrs. Hinklebrick's desk. Everyone became more scared of her than ever. I should have said something, I should have spoken up. But I didn't. Gertie didn't even know me and she sacrificed herself for me. I'm sorry I didn't defend her the way she defended me. (*exits ashamed*)

RACHEL: (*enters with JESSIE and speaks to the audience*) As we said before, drama class was an oasis for us.

JESSIE: We knew once we walked through Mrs. Fillmore's door we were safe from everyone, including scary weirdos like Gertie Greene.

RACHEL: Until Mrs. Fillmore and our school counselor, Mrs. Cranberry, ruined everything.

Focus shifts to MRS. CRANBERRY and GERTIE, seated across from each other as if they are in a school

counselor's office. RACHEL and JESSIE sit down and quietly watch the scene.

MRS. CRANBERRY: Gertie, dear, a few of the teachers have approached me. They're concerned about you. (*Waits for GERTIE's reaction. GERTIE sits silently.*) And I have some bad news for you. It seems you are failing history. (*We hear MRS. HINKLEBRICK's loud, cackling laugh from offstage. GERTIE snorts and turns away, half laughing, half angry.*) In fact, your grade is so low right now there's simply no way for you to pass this semester. (*GERTIE folds her arms and tightens her jaw*) Well, I've been talking to Mrs. Fillmore, the drama teacher. She had the best idea! I'm going to pull you from history class this semester. (*GERTIE looks up*) You can retake it next semester from a different teacher and pass it then. In the meantime, Mrs. Fillmore suggested we enroll you in drama class! Doesn't that sound fun? (*GERTIE's eyes narrow and she turns away again*) Mrs. Fillmore is one of the best teachers in our school and she specially requested to have you in her class! Isn't that fantastic? (*no response*) Great! I'll enroll you straightaway.

RACHEL: (*standing up*) And that's how the next afternoon Gertie Greene showed up in our drama class.

RACHEL and the other STUDENTS enter the drama classroom. There is lots of chatting and laughing among the STUDENTS until GERTIE enters. The STUDENTS fall silent, staring at her. GERTIE pauses for a moment to look at everyone, as if she's hoping someone will be friendly. When no one responds, GERTIE frowns, trudges to a seat, sits down, crosses her arms, and ignores everyone.

MRS. FILLMORE: (*entering*) Hello, everyone, what a beautiful day! I'm delighted you're all here. I'd like to welcome a new student to our class. Everyone please give a warm welcome to Miss Gertie Greene.

ANNA: (*Trots right up to GERTIE, grabs her hand and shakes it. With a huge smile.*) Hello!

GERTIE is taken aback. The rest of the STUDENTS applaud halfheartedly, a few say welcome. MRS. FILLMORE notices the class's lackluster greeting but doesn't push the issue.

MRS. FILLMORE: Nicole, could you do me a favor, please?

NICOLE: Umm, yes, Mrs. Fillmore?

MRS. FILLMORE: Could you help Gertie out as she gets to know our class routines? Answer her questions, show her where things are, etcetera?

NICOLE: Umm, okay, Mrs. Fillmore. *(she tentatively takes a step toward GERTIE, who turns away and refuses to look at anyone)*

MRS. FILLMORE: For our first activity we'll be working in pairs. Gertie and Nicole, why don't you work together? Everyone else pair up and get out a piece of paper and a pencil. *(There is much shuffling and noise as everyone pairs up. NICOLE gets out a pencil and paper and stands awkwardly by GERTIE, who doesn't even acknowledge her.)* All right, your assignment is to write a short script containing a tragic hero.

C.J.: What the heck is a tragic hero?

Several members of the class sigh and shake their heads.

MRS. FILLMORE: Who can help C.J. out with his question? *(Several hands go in the air. ALEX does not raise her hand.)* What is a tragic hero?

ANNA: *(before anyone else has a chance to speak)* The tragic hero is the main character in the story.

MRS. FILLMORE: That's a start, Anna. Alex. *(ALEX looks worried)* Why are they tragic?

ALEX: Umm... Because... because the bad stuff is brought on by the character's own choices?

MRS. FILLMORE: Exactly right, Alex. Fantastic!

ALEX looks relieved and grins.

JACOB: *(jumps up)* Or the character is taken down by a fatal flaw!

BRYAN: And we all know fatal flaws can be deadly. *(Proud of his joke. No one else is.)*

MRS. FILLMORE: Correct. What smart students I have! Together you will write a short script where the main character, through a fatal flaw or their own decisions, causes their own downfall. Then each group will read their script aloud while other students in the class pantomime it. *(STUDENTS nod, laugh and smile. They are excited to get to work.)* Everyone understand the assignment? Annnnnnd GO!

Lights fade on the rest of the class who write quietly in pairs through the next monologue. NICOLE remains in the light. She sets down her paper and pencil, comes forward, and talks to the audience.

NICOLE: There's something I didn't say earlier. Something I didn't tell anyone about Gertie Greene. I should have spoken up, I should have said something. But it all happened so fast. (*pauses to collect her thoughts*) I mean, everyone in school knows that Gertie Greene punched Pete Mackleson in the face. But nobody but me knows why. You see, I'd gone out on my first date the night before she did it. My very first date. With Pete Mackleson. The most handsome, popular guy in school. I didn't think he even knew I existed, but then he was really nice to me in math class, helping me out when I was having trouble. (*PETE walks onstage near NICOLE*) One day after class he came up to me and asked me,

PETE: (*confident and cocky*) Hey. Would you like to go to that new *Transformers* movie (*replace with a more timely reference*) with me tonight?

NICOLE: (*to PETE*) Who me? (*PETE nods and laughs*) Oh. Umm, yeah! Okay! (*back to the audience*) I tried to play it cool, but my heart was racing! The most popular guy in school had just asked me to a movie! (*through the next several lines she moves to sit down beside PETE as if they are in a movie theater*) My parents dropped me off at the theater and Pete was nice to me at first. But then he started getting... pushy. I didn't know what to do. When the credits rolled he leaned over to kiss me and I stopped him. I told him I wasn't ready to kiss him yet, that I hadn't kissed anyone before. He said,

PETE: Well, duh. That's why I asked you out.

NICOLE: That hurt my feelings! But I didn't want to be rude so I just turned away and started talking about something else. But he wouldn't let it go. He kept saying,

PETE: Come on, let me kiss you. Just one kiss. Come on. I took you to the movie. So kiss me already.

NICOLE: I told him again that I was sorry but I didn't want him to kiss me. That's when he got mad. He grabbed my arm and said,

PETE: I paid for the movie and bought you popcorn and you won't even kiss me? You're so lame. No wonder nobody at school wants to kiss you.

NICOLE: I was furious! (*acting out the scene as she narrates it*) I yanked my arm out of his grasp and marched out of the theater with my head held high. I was NOT going to waste my first kiss on that creep! As I left, Pete shouted after me,

PETE: You just wait! You'll be sorry you treated me like this!

NICOLE: The next day at school the rumor mill was churning.

The lights shift to include the rest of the STUDENTS. They start to whisper to one another, stare, point, laugh, etc. at NICOLE. PETE stands smugly, arms crossed, looking triumphantly at NICOLE. The GOSSIPERS' lines are delivered quickly and nearly overlap.

GOSSIPER 1: Did you hear about last night?

GOSSIPER 2: He went out with her??!

GOSSIPER 3: I can't believe she would do anything like that!

GOSSIPER 4: No way!

GOSSIPER 5: I always knew she wasn't what she seemed.

GOSSIPER 6: That's scandalous!

GOSSIPER 7: No! She wouldn't do that! Would she?

NICOLE: Then I found out what they were all saying. They said that me and Pete had gone to the movies together but we hadn't even watched the movie because we were so busy making out the whole time! (*GOSSIPERS make kissing noises or pantomime making out to make fun of NICOLE*) I felt like everyone was talking about me, laughing at me, judging me. But what could I do? If I denied it no one would believe me!

Lights fade on the rest of the class, leaving NICOLE and PETE in the light. The STUDENTS go back to writing their scripts.

That afternoon I found Pete alone in the hallway and confronted him. He grabbed my arm, grinned at me, and said,

PETE: It doesn't matter that you wouldn't kiss me. Now the whole school thinks you're a –

NICOLE: (*cuts him off*) And he used a horrible word. No one's ever called me anything like that before! That's when Gertie Greene came around the corner. She saw me trapped. She heard what he

said. *(the following is pantomimed in slow motion by GERTIE, PETE, and NICOLE)* Before I could say or do anything, her face turned red, she balled up her fists, and she punched him so hard in the face it knocked him right to the ground. She said,

GERTIE: Touch her again and you won't have any teeth left to talk with.

NICOLE: Suddenly the bell rang and students poured into the hallway.

The STUDENTS stand up, come forward, and gawk at GERTIE, PETE, and NICOLE. They point and pantomime whispering to one another.

They saw Gertie Greene, fists clenched, standing over a bleeding, moaning Pete. Mr. Harrison hauled her to the office, but she didn't defend herself. She didn't say a word. *(GERTIE stomps through the crowd back to her seat.)* And I was too scared to tell him what really happened. So Gertie Greene was suspended for two days. Everyone started talking about her and forgot about me.

The STUDENTS exaggeratedly gossip with one another as they walk back to their spots, then go back to writing their scripts.

And that creep, Pete, never bothered me again.

PETE stands up holding his nose and walks away looking disgusted.

I know. I know why she punched Pete Mackleson. I know that Gertie Greene isn't a mean, terrible person. And I still haven't told anyone yet.

NICOLE goes back to her seat and picks up her pencil and paper as lights come up on the classroom. STUDENTS write more busily and there is general classroom bustle and clatter.

MRS. FILLMORE: I see some good stuff. Let's wrap it up.

NICOLE: *(standing awkwardly beside GERTIE)* Umm. Do you have any ideas? *(no response)* I think I might have one. *(no response)* Okay, I'll just write it down. If you see something you want to change just let me know.

GERTIE doesn't look at her or the paper. NICOLE waits for one more moment, then sits and starts writing busily. She continues to write through most of the following scene.

C.J.: Mrs. Fillmore, you are going to LOVE our script! It's like, the best story ever.

MRS. FILLMORE: That is quite a claim, C.J. But I must admit, you have piqued my curiosity! Let's have you gentlemen go first.

C.J. & JACOB: *(high-fiving)* YES! *(the rest of the class looks excited, too)*

MRS. FILLMORE: Who would like to pantomime their scene as they read it? *(lots of hands in the air)*

JACOB: Oh, we're gonna need a whole lot of people!

MRS. FILLMORE: Pick whomever you need.

JACOB: This half of the class, you're aliens!

C.J.: And this half of the class, you're zombies!

MRS. FILLMORE: Gentlemen, not to cast a shadow of doubt on your scene, but are you sure this contains a tragic hero?

C.J.: Yeah, it totally does. Like, a bazillion of them.

JACOB: Don't worry, we got this.

C.J.: *(in a big, movie announcer voice)* It was the year 2099. The world had been overrun by zombies. *(he cues the ZOMBIES, who begin to walk about stiffly)* The zombies were strong and powerful, but they had one weakness. They would do anything for brains!

ZOMBIES: *(creepy)* Braaaaains.

ZOMBIE 1: *(loudly as the others are finishing)* Veeeegetables...

C.J. and all of the other ZOMBIES stop and stare at him, making him trail off. They continue staring at him until he corrects himself.

...uhhh... braaaaains!

ZOMBIES nod and C.J goes back to the scene.

C.J.: And I mean anything!

The ZOMBIES walk over to the front of the stage and begin reaching for the audience, chomping their teeth and groaning hungrily at them.

JACOB: That's when the fearsome aliens arrived on planet earth.

He makes an overdramatic sound effect of a spaceship arriving and cues the ALIENS, who jump up enthusiastically, but aren't quite sure what to do. As JACOB describes them, they become what he describes.

The aliens had gigantic heads full of gloppy, sloppy brains!

ZOMBIES: *(their attention slowly turns to the ALIENS)* Braaaaains.

JACOB: But they also had huge, sharp teeth and long, dangerous claws.

C.J.: When the zombies saw the aliens they became ravenously hungry. *(ZOMBIES act hungry)* They realized that the last brain they had eaten was 20 years ago, when they tracked down the very last human being. They saw the aliens' sharp teeth and feared the aliens' long claws, but the zombies could not resist their giant heads full of brains!

ZOMBIES: Braaaaains.

JACOB: The zombies attacked the aliens! The aliens fought back! *(the STUDENTS act out an epic ZOMBIE versus ALIEN battle)* There was slashing and biting and guts flying everywhere! Soon the zombies were all lying on the ground dead, shredded to pieces by the aliens.

C.J.: Their hunger for brains had led to their tragic demise!

JACOB & C.J.: The end!

The STUDENTS applaud, laugh, and make positive comments like "That was so fun!" "You were an awesome zombie!" etc. as they get up, dust themselves off, and return to their seats.

MRS. FILLMORE: Well, that was... unique. We'll work with it. Class, who were the tragic heroes in this... peculiar scene?

THE CLASS: The zombies!

MRS. FILLMORE: Yes, okay. And what was their tragic flaw?

THE CLASS: They wanted brains!

MRS. FILLMORE: Right again. You had me worried, gentlemen, but I believe you pulled it off. Now, who would like to go next? *(Several hands go in the air eagerly. ANNA jumps up and down. MRS. FILLMORE waits patiently, looking at NICOLE.)* Nicole?

NICOLE: Umm, sure, okay. We'll go.

NICOLE stands up and comes forward to read the scene. She beckons to GERTIE but GERTIE doesn't move. NICOLE looks helplessly at MRS. FILLMORE.

MRS. FILLMORE: Ah, Gertie, I forget, it's your first day. We are an intimidating group, aren't we? If you'd like to sit this one out that would be fine. *(She waits expectantly. No response from GERTIE.)*

SHANNON: That's not fair! We never get to sit anything out. She should have to do it!

NICOLE: Leave her alone, Shannon! She doesn't have to if she doesn't want to. *(everyone is slightly taken aback at NICOLE's outburst)*

MRS. FILLMORE: All right, who can pantomime Nicole and Gertie's scene? *(several hands go in the air)*

ANNA: I'll do it. Pick me! *(jumps up and runs forward without being chosen)*

REBECCA: *(coming forward too)* I'll do it, too.

NICOLE: Okay, umm, we need a guy.

C.J.: I got this.

JEFF: Sit down, C.J., you've done quite enough already. I'll help. *(comes forward)*

NICOLE: Okay, this is a story for kids. A fable.

MRS. FILLMORE: Ah, a fable with a tragic hero. Excellent idea! Students, let's remind ourselves. What is a fable?

ANNA: Oo oo oo, I know! Pick me! I know what a fable is!

MRS. FILLMORE: Yes, Anna?

ANNA: *(straightens up, proudly)* A fable is a short story that teaches a lesson. Usually the main characters are animals. *(basks in her knowledge)*

MRS. FILLMORE: Very good, Anna. All right, Nicole, whenever you're ready.

NICOLE looks slightly nervous but begins. As NICOLE reads, she cues the actors to pantomime their parts. The other STUDENTS are engaged in the story, saying "Awww," gasping, etc. as NICOLE reads. GERTIE pretends not to pay attention, but it is obvious that she is listening and reacting, too.

NICOLE: Once upon a time there was a big, strong bear. She had huge muscles, sharp teeth, and gigantic paws with long, sharp claws.

C.J.: Maybe the bear's an alien!

JACOB: Yeah!

RACHEL: Shhhh! Knock it off, guys.

NICOLE: *(a little flustered by the interruption but she goes on)* Everyone in the forest knew she was the biggest and the strongest. But underneath her gigantic muscles and shaggy fur beat a kind, tender heart.

As the scene progresses, GERTIE becomes more and more involved in the story. She tries not to show it, but NICOLE's scene affects her.

One day the bear came across a helpless bird trapped in the paws of a weasel. The weasel was well-known in the forest. Everyone thought he was handsome and clever, and everyone wanted to be his friend. The poor bird was shy and quiet. In fact, she couldn't even speak. But as the weasel tightened his grip and bared his teeth, the little bird's eyes pled with the bear to help her. With a giant roar, the bear reared up on her haunches and lifted her massive paw. She swung it with a mighty force so strong the weasel flew all the way across the clearing. All the teeth were knocked from the weasel's jaw so he couldn't bite the little bird ever again. *(NICOLE gestures for a few other STUDENTS to join in. They help act out the rest of the scene.)* The other forest animals came running when they heard the bear's bellow. They saw their friend weasel crumpled on the ground. They blamed the bear, attacking her and driving her from the clearing. *(as the actors drive the bear away, GERTIE stands up and takes several steps toward the actors as if she wants to save the bear herself)* The shy little bird was too scared to help her. From then on, everyone in the forest was scared of the bear. They called her names and ran away when she came near. *(As NICOLE says the final lines of her story, she walks toward GERTIE and looks her right in the eye)* And because the shy little bird had no voice, she could never explain what had happened and no one ever knew the truth. The end.

The STUDENTS applaud while NICOLE and GERTIE lock eyes. A school bell rings. The STUDENTS stand up and collect their belongings, but NICOLE and GERTIE stay frozen, looking at each other.

MRS. FILLMORE: Really great work today, everyone. Please give me your scripts on the way out.

The STUDENTS exit, handing their scripts to MRS. FILLMORE, talking to one another, etc. but NICOLE and GERTIE are still looking at each other. As the bustle dies away, NICOLE slowly walks up to GERTIE and hands her the paper.

NICOLE: *(slowly, with feeling)* Thank you.

GERTIE takes the paper and looks at it, obviously moved, but she doesn't say anything. NICOLE grabs her bag and exits quietly.

MRS. FILLMORE: *(walks up to GERTIE and gently touches her on the shoulder)* Gertie, I'm so glad you've joined our class.

She smiles and sits at her desk to read the other scripts, leaving GERTIE standing alone looking at the paper in her hands. GERTIE stares at the paper for a few beats, then hugs the script to her chest. She sits back down, obviously touched by NICOLE's gesture.

RACHEL, REBECCA and BETH enter.

RACHEL: *(to the audience.)* Over the next few weeks, we got used to having Gertie Greene in our drama class.

REBECCA: It wasn't that hard because the whole time she just sat there silently, ignoring everybody.

RACHEL: We left Gertie Greene alone.

BETH: And she left us alone.

REBECCA: Mrs. Fillmore tried and tried to get her to participate, but Gertie Greene never responded.

BETH: You gotta give Mrs. Fillmore credit. She never gave up.

RACHEL: Until one day, something changed.

The rest of the STUDENTS enter and settle into the classroom as MRS. FILLMORE talks.

MRS. FILLMORE: All right, my gems, let's begin. Today we're going to warm up with some positive affirmations.

SHANNON: But we did that the third week of class.

MRS. FILLMORE: I know, Shannon, but one member of our class wasn't here then. So today it's Gertie Greene's turn.

GERTIE looks up with a “deer in the headlights” expression. MRS. FILLMORE sets a chair in the center of the room, then brings GERTIE to the chair.

Gertie, we’re going to go around the room and whoever wants to will say something nice about you.

GERTIE sits awkwardly in the chair. The class looks just as uncomfortable as GERTIE, they aren’t sure they will be able to think of anything to say.

I’ll start. Gertie, you have excellent attendance and you are always on time. As a teacher, I value that.

The STUDENTS look at one another, very uncomfortable. No one wants to speak up. MRS. FILLMORE looks at each of them in turn, waiting patiently. A long pause.

NICOLE: *(bravely stands up and breaks the silence)* Gertie, I like how you stand up for people that can’t stand up for themselves.

CURT: *(stands up too)* You aren’t afraid of anybody. You’ll take on an entire football team just to defend one wimpy kid.

ALEX: *(stands up)* Even teachers don’t scare you. I wish I could take care of myself the way you took care of me.

Each student stands up as they deliver their affirmation. Although she tries to hide it, we see each affirmation affect GERTIE.

JEFF: I admire how other people’s opinions seem to roll off your back. I wish I didn’t care so much about what other people thought of me.

SHANNON: You’re not afraid to do your own thing.

C.J.: And you’re so strong, dude.

JACOB: Yeah, like super strong. I would never pick a fight with you.

REBECCA: Don’t let anyone make fun of your clothes. You have your own unique fashion sense, and that’s awesome.

RACHEL: I never hear you whine or complain. You just do what needs to be done.

BRYAN: You’re good at sports. Honestly Gertie, I’m a little “green” with envy about how far you hit the baseball in gym class the other day.



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