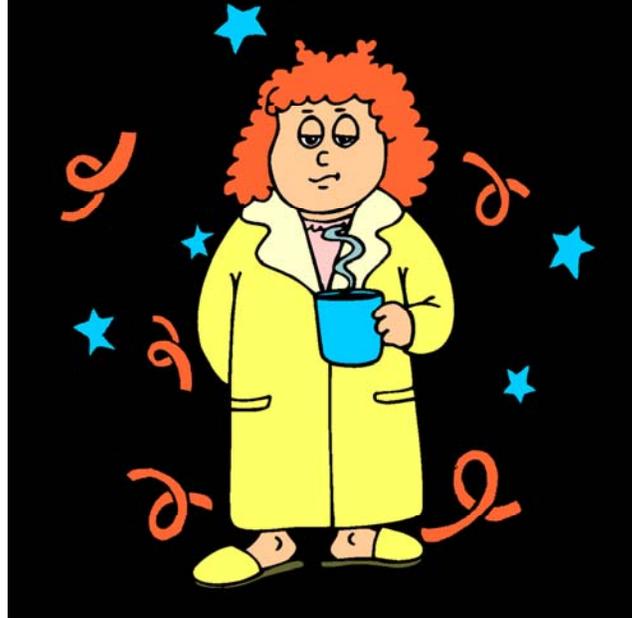


Natalie's Super Humongous Freak Out!



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Natalie's Super-Humongous Freak-Out!

COMEDY. The day doesn't start off too well for Natalie, the editor of the school newspaper. When Natalie arrives at school, she discovers she is still wearing her pajamas. Then when she meets with her rag-tag group of reporters, she has to listen to Marcus' "oatmeal story"; hide Brantly from his slurpy-kissing girlfriend; and deal with Jelica, the gossip columnist who wears a cape and mask and calls herself "The Masked Mistress of Gossip." But when Natalie is falsely accused of setting off a stink bomb in the girls' bathroom, and her boyfriend breaks up with her so he can date her step-sister, things quickly unravel until Natalie has one super-humongous freak-out!

Performance Time: Approximately 90 minutes

Characters

(4 M, 6 F, 5 flexible)

NATALIE: Stressed-out student newspaper editor; wears a nightgown, robe, and slippers.

MARLA: Natalie's new step-sister; thoughtful and intelligent.

NATHAN: Yearns to be the next newspaper editor; a complainer; has wild hair.

DIONE: Student newspaper reporter; sincere.

MARCUS: Student newspaper reporter who makes up his own far-fetched stories.

JELICA: Student newspaper gossip columnist who transforms herself into "The Masked Mistress of Gossip"; wears a mask and a long cape with lace, ruffles, or bows on it.

SANNA: Student newspaper reporter; shy.

BRANTLY: On the run from his girlfriend Susabella.

SUSABELLA: Brantly's girlfriend; a super sloppy kisser.

MRS. T: Principal; flexible.

BARN: Natalie's boyfriend; wears ratty clothes; speaks with a country accent.

DETECTIVE REYNOLDS: Not-too-bright police detective; wears a trench coat and hat; flexible.

DETECTIVE JAMES: Dimwitted police detective in training; wears a trench coat and hat; flexible.

MRS. GRAPPLE: Editor of the city newspaper; flexible.

MR. SHYSTER: Newspaper attorney; flexible.

NOTE: Names/pronouns may be changed to reflect the ethnic makeup/gender of the cast.

Setting

A school newspaper office. It contains a few desks or tables and chairs, bulletin boards with lots of papers pinned to them, wastebaskets, and file cabinets. The desks and floor are cluttered with paper, pencils, and books. At SL is a small room or a partitioned area that serves as Natalie's office. It has a cluttered desk, computer, and file cabinet.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I: A school newspaper office.

ACT II: School newspaper office, three days later.

Props

Student desks or chairs	Nightgown, robe, slippers, for Marla
School newspaper "The Rag-Tag Rag"	Large full-length raincoat, for Natalie
Book bags	10 Shirts, for Natalie
Cup of coffee	Umbrella
Pencils	Pair of pants with a large hole in the seat, for Marcus
Office desk and chair	Beret
Oversized jacket, for Brantly	Ascot
2 Pairs of big loose gaudy boxer shorts, for Marcus	Pipe
Computer or laptop	Type-written sheets of paper
Books	Check
Papers	Pajamas, for Nathan
2 Pistols	Bottle of catsup
Pad of paper	Hand towel
Handkerchief	
Telephone	

Special Effects

Smoke (or character can hold some loose powder and toss it up so that it floats down to look like smoke)	Loud pop (can be made by slapping two boards together)
	Soot
	School bell

NOTE: Many sound effects can be found online. Just type in "sound effects" on any search engine.

**“What happened to normalcy—
normal people
doing normal things?”**

—Natalie

Act i

(AT RISE: A school newspaper office. Dione, Jelica, Marla, Marcus, and Sanna are at various desks or sitting in chairs, writing, eating, or just thinking. Marcus never moves from his chair. Nathan is standing and speaking to the group.)

NATHAN: I say we dump her. She's made us the laughing stock of the school. I mean, even the name of the school paper – which she selected – is laughable.

DIONE: You mean, you don't like the name, "The Rag-Tag Rag"?

NATHAN: Every time I hear it, it makes me want to yurp.

DIONE: But, Nathan, newspapers have traditionally been called "rags," and we're certainly a "rag-tag" bunch. It fits perfectly.

(Nathan sits.)

NATHAN: Maybe it fits you, Dione. But I'm a bit more dignified than that. *(He puts his feet up on a desk and leans back in his chair.)*

DIONE: Is that why you're always leaning back in your chair with your feet up on your desk?

NATHAN: Hey! *(He pulls his feet off the desk.)* My feet have nothing to do with this.

DIONE: And what about your hair?

NATHAN: My hair?

DIONE: You might try combing it once in awhile.

NATHAN: *(Points to his hair.)* This is combed. It's my own special creation.

DIONE: I would call it "rag-tag." As in "disorderly" and "messy."

(Angrily, Nathan stands.)

NATHAN: Yeah? Well, maybe once a month or something you might try shaving under your arms.

DIONE: What?!

MARLA: Dione, Nathan! Can we cut out this crap? We've got a newspaper to put out.

NATHAN: I think we've got an editor to put out—out to pasture, that is. A pasture in the next state preferably. You agree with me, don't you, Marcus?

MARCUS: *(He is oblivious to events surrounding him.)* I spilled my bowl of oatmeal on a kitchen chair this morning.

NATHAN: What on earth does that have to do with anything?

MARCUS: I think he'll be coming after me.

DIONE: Who?

MARCUS: My big brother. It was his chair. I think he sat in it.

DIONE: In the chair?

MARCUS: In the oatmeal.

NATHAN: *(To others.)* You see? He agrees with me that Natalie should go.

MARLA: I didn't hear him say that.

NATHAN: Yeah, well, you're just taking up for her because she's your sister.

MARLA: Natalie is my half-sister.

NATHAN: Well, that explains why she's only got *half* a brain.

MARLA: Same mother, different father, new family. Maybe that's a step-sister. I don't know.

NATHAN: I say we dump her—right now, today. Who's with me?

(All but Sanna reluctantly raise their hands and keep them up. Marla pauses a few seconds before raising her hand.)

SANNA: Marla? You're voting against your own family person?

MARLA: What can I say, Sanna? Nathan's right. She's been kinda ditzzy lately.

NATHAN: Kinda? I'd say totally off the map. Off the planet. Over the moon and into her own crazy galaxy.

(Natalie enters. She is wearing a nightgown and a robe and slippers. She carries a book bag and a cup of coffee. She stops when she sees them. She stares at them, and they stare at her. Natalie looks at their hands in the air.)

NATALIE: Does this mean all of you have to go to the bathroom at the same time?

(They sheepishly lower their hands.)

MARLA: No. Natalie, hi. We were just...exercising our arms. *(To the group.)* Exercise, everybody. Up, down, up, down. *(They pump their arms up and down.)* It's a new policy: exercise to wake up before typing. *(She looks around. They stop exercising their arms.)* But then we can't do any typing anyway because someone has removed the only computer we have. *We had.*

NATALIE: That would have been me.

NATHAN: *(To others.)* What did I tell you? Crazy.

MARLA: *(To Natalie.)* Why?

NATALIE: We've been coming up with some pretty lousy stories lately, so I decided to hide it until we came up with something worth typing.

(Nathan holds up a copy of the school paper.)

NATHAN: *(Sarcastic.)* With a name like "The Rag-Tag Rag," what do you expect?

NATALIE: I expect stories that are exciting, thought-provoking—inspiring even. *(Pause.)* Or I'd settle for

something mildly interesting. *(To Marcus.)* Written in complete sentences – with subjects and verbs.

MARCUS: Did I tell you about my oatmeal incident?

NATALIE: Marcus, our readers are not interested in oatmeal stories.

MARCUS: Why not? Everybody here liked it.

(The others grumble aloud and turn away from him.)

NATALIE: I believe that's a big fat no way.

NATHAN: *(To Natalie.)* What was wrong with *my* story?

NATALIE: Your headline was, "Mrs. Murtlemuss gets three tickets."

NATHAN: Yeah, so?

NATHAN: But you didn't write the story. You submitted the headline and left the rest of the page blank.

NATHAN: The title was provocative, so I thought I would let the readers draw their own conclusions.

SANNA: Mrs. Murtlemuss got three tickets? Our math teacher? Is she going to jail?

NATALIE: No, Sanna. The tickets were for the county fair. She bought them.

MARLA: Nathan, you didn't.

NATHAN: Hey, the story was the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

NATALIE: It wasn't the "whole truth," Nathan. It was misleading, to say the least. And, Dione, your story was titled, "Mr. Littlebody cleans out the computer lab."

DIONE: That really happened, Natalie.

NATALIE: But you make it sound like he robbed the place. He cleaned it out with a broom and a mop. It hadn't been cleaned in a year.

DIONE: I was just trying to spice things up a bit.

NATALIE: Well, you spiced them up too much.

JELICA: What about my gossip column? It was fabulous, but you cut it, too.

NATALIE: Where did you get those stories, Jelica?

JELICA: (*Proudly.*) I made them up.

NATALIE: That's why I cut it. You're supposed to be a reporter. You *report* gossip; you don't create it.

JELICA: Really? But I asked three people if they had any gossip, and they all said no.

NATALIE: Don't ask. Listen in on their conversations. Observe strange behaviors. Put your ear to the wall. Overhear things.

JELICA: You mean, like, snoop?

NATALIE: Yes. Exactly. There's enough real gossip going on in this school to fill an encyclopedia. Just find it—and report it.

JELICA: Wait. I know. I'll start some gossip, and when it gets back around to me, I'll report it. That way, it will be real gossip, and I'll have the inside track on it. Sometimes, I can be so smart.

NATALIE: Jelica, no.

JELICA: Natalie, you're always shooting down my brilliant ideas.

NATALIE: When they get to "brilliant," I'll stop shooting.

MARLA: (*To Natalie.*) You printed my article.

JELICA: Yeah. Because she's your sister.

NATALIE: (*Reluctantly.*) Marla's article was actually...fairly decent.

MARLA: Mr. Beamer gave me an A-plus on it in English class.

NATALIE: I said it was fairly decent. What do you want from me?

NATHAN: Always so negative, Natalie. You have no concern for people's feelings.

NATALIE: Oh, but I do, Nathan. That's why I insist on a first-rate newspaper. And that starts with good, solid—and honest—reporting. And if you don't like the way I run it, you can quit.

NATHAN: Or we can vote ourselves a new editor.

(Natalie glares at him for a few seconds.)

NATALIE: Nathan, you're fired.

NATHAN: You can't fire me.

NATALIE: Your pay will be suspended starting immediately.

NATHAN: My pay? I'm a student, and this is a volunteer job. I don't get paid.

NATALIE: Well, that's just about what you're worth. But you're still fired. *(Angry and disgusted, Nathan turns away. Natalie turns to Sanna.)* Sanna?

SANNA: *(Frightened.)* I didn't do it. I'm a totally innocent person.

NATALIE: Didn't do what?

SANNA: Whatever you're going to accuse me of.

NATALIE: I was just going to ask you how many ads you've gotten for this month's issue.

SANNA: *(She brightens.)* Oh, uh, 25! It was real easy.

NATALIE: *(Surprised.)* Hey, that's great. And how much income will that be?

SANNA: Income?

NATALIE: How much are they paying?

SANNA: Paying? Are they supposed to be paying?

NATALIE: Yes!

SANNA: Oh. Well, can't we just give them the ads? I mean, they were very pleased to be getting free space in our paper!

NATALIE: Sanna, ads are the lifeblood of a newspaper—and we need a serious transfusion. They pay for the paper and the photocopying and all the supplies. Up until now, the school's been paying for everything. But Mrs. T says it can't do that anymore. We have to sell the ads.

SANNA: Oh. Well, how do I do that?

NATALIE: Beg, plead, and cajole.

SANNA: Really?

NATALIE: Be assertive. Be aggressive.

SANNA: Can't I just be polite?

NATALIE: Polite doesn't sell ads, Sanna. You've got to be forceful. Threaten them with certain death if you have to.

SANNA: Really?

NATALIE: Whatever it takes. Just sell ads!

SANNA: *(Mildly.)* Okay.

NATALIE: And start with the biggest companies in town—like Holstein, Inc. That's where the real money is.

SANNA: *(Softly.)* Yes, ma'am.

(Natalie looks around the room.)

NATALIE: Now get to work on your assigned stories.

MARCUS: You haven't assigned us any stories.

NATALIE: That's because you haven't brought me any ideas.

Bring me ideas, Nathan.

MARCUS: I really like my oatmeal story.

JELICA: That you made up, and, besides, it stinks.

NATALIE: No oatmeal stories, Marcus. *(She moves toward her office at SL.)* Remember our motto: "Seek, find, and report the news."

JELICA: I like mine better: "Create, invent, and stretch the stories."

(Natalie turns back.)

NATALIE: And you can be certain they will never see the light of day.

MARLA: What about the computer? We need the computer.

NATALIE: It will magically reappear when I see a story worth typing up. *(To the group.)* Meanwhile, you haven't forgotten what a pencil is for, have you? *(She holds up a pencil for them to see.)* You write with this end, and you erase with this end. I have an extra supply of erasers for you—because I know you will need them. If you need more instructions on the use of a pencil, see Marla. I'm sure she can explain it. I'll be in my office.

(Natalie gives a handful of pencils to Marla, and then exits into her office SL and sits behind her desk. She sighs deeply. Hesitantly, Marla holds up a pencil.)

MARLA: Anybody need any further explanation of...a pencil?

NATHAN: Oh, shut up, Marla, and sit down. What do you know?

JELICA: Oh. Juicy gossip in the newsroom. I think I'm getting the hang of this. *(She jots words down on a sheet of paper.)* "Nathan tells Marla to get the lead out. And Marla replies by telling him to—"

MARLA: Oh, stick it up your nose, Nathan.

JELICA: Excellent comeback, Marla. *(She writes furiously.)* And I can add a few comments that weren't actually made but were probably thought..."fool, jerk, moron—"

MARLA: Jelica, can it!

JELICA: *(She writes even faster.)* "Marla attacks intrepid reporter."

NATHAN: Well, if she thinks she can fire me and get away with all this craziness of hers, she's wrong. I'm going to see Mrs. T. *(He marches to the door SR.)*

DIONE: Tattletale.

MARLA: You don't need to involve the principal, Nathan. We can handle this.

NATHAN: Well, there is one way to keep me out of her office.

MARLA: Do we really want to know what that way is?

NATHAN: Fire Natalie.

SANNA: We've already agreed that's a good idea, haven't we? I mean, we all raised our hands. Except me.

NATHAN: And make me the new editor.

DIONE: My hand just went down.

(The others grumble.)

JELICA: *(Writes.)* "Wannabe editor threatens staff."

SANNA: (*Incredulous.*) You can't be an editor.

MARLA: You're too busy being a troublemaker.

MARCUS: (*In his own private world.*) I have another funny story I could tell.

DIONE: I'd vote for you, Nathan.

NATHAN: Good, thanks, Dione.

DIONE: If, as your first order, you would fire yourself.

(*They laugh.*)

MARCUS: If anybody would listen.

NATHAN: We'll see who has the last laugh.

MARCUS: Or I could do a different slant on my wonderful oatmeal story.

DIONE: You heard what Natalie said. Let's get to work.

MARLA: Here are the pencils. (*She hands out pencils to everyone.*) Don't break the lead. (*She hands one to Nathan.*) Nathan?

(*Jelica watches, with pencil poised to write.*)

JELICA: Will he actually stick it up his nose? The public wants to know.

NATHAN: (*Angrily.*) I'll be back with reinforcements! (*He exits angrily without taking the pencil.*)

JELICA: (*Writes.*) "No. He passes. The story will continue in the next issue of "The Rag-Tag Rag." Signed, The Masked Mistress of Gossip." (*She looks up.*) "The Masked Mistress of Gossip." Yeah, I like that. I'll need a costume, of course. A mask and a cape. Then I can sneak around campus incognito.

SANNA: In-cog-what-oh?

JELICA: In-cog-NEE-tow. Masked and unrecognized. Then I can do whatever, and no one will ever know it was I.

SANNA: It won't work.

JELICA: Sure it will. It worked when I was in the seventh grade. I brought six alarm clocks to school and set them to go off in student lockers five minutes apart. Then I stood back and watched the chaos! It was great fun.

SANNA: You didn't.

JELICA: I wrote a story about it for English. One of my best.

SANNA: And what grade did you get for it?

JELICA: An "F" and a week's detention—when they found out it was me. But this time, I will be in disguise. Ha!

(Jelica writes. The others begin reading, writing, and thinking. Dione stands and moves quietly to Natalie's office SL.)

MARLA: *(To Dione.)* Talking to her is not going to help, Dione.

(Dione shrugs and goes in anyway.)

DIONE: Uh, Natalie, uh, hi.

NATALIE: Dione? What is it? Got a scoop?

DIONE: Well, yeah. I do.

NATALIE: And it is...?

DIONE: How's this for a headline, "Newspaper editor sleeps it off"?

NATALIE: What does that mean?

DIONE: You're wearing your nightgown, Natalie—to school.

NATALIE: I'm what? *(She looks at herself.)* Oh! *(She thinks quickly.)* Oh, well. No. You're mistaken. Nightgown? No. This is from the latest [Dior] collection. *[Or change "Dior" to another well-known designer.]* It's from her "Sleepwear as Daywear" campaign. It's sweeping the nation. Nationwide even.

DIONE: You're the only one wearing it.

NATALIE: That's because I'm a, uh, style leader, Dione, not a style follower. I'm at the head of the pack. I'm breaking

new ground here. By next month, everybody will be wearing their pj's to school.

DIONE: Only if they want to be expelled. Natalie, you are losing it, girl. You know that, don't you? What's going on?

NATALIE: What's going on?

DIONE: Yeah. As in, what's bugging you?

NATALIE: You want the truth?

DIONE: Of course.

NATALIE: Well, I'm wearing my nightgown because I want to be prepared in case I decide to take a nap.

DIONE: Not *that* truth. When you started "The Rag-Tag Rag", you were excited and dynamic and filled with great ideas. And you were a good leader. Now, it's like you don't care anymore.

NATALIE: Oh, I care. I care a lot. That's why nobody will put a story into the computer this month without my approval—in advance.

DIONE: Isn't that called censorship?

NATALIE: Did you see what Jelica said in her gossip column last month about Marla and me?

DIONE: She didn't have an article last month. You cut it.

NATALIE: And that's the real reason why I cut it. She said I said my mother likes Marla more than she likes me.

DIONE: Oh, you know she makes up those things.

NATALIE: But this one is true. I did say it.

(Pause.)

DIONE: Oh.

NATALIE: But I didn't want it printed. Marla is perfect and I'm weird.

DIONE: Well, you *are* wearing a nightgown to school. You have to admit that's kinda strange.

NATALIE: So Marla gets the attention—and I get the detention.

DIONE: What?

NATALIE: I want my mom back! She's mine, not hers. Just because Marla's dad marries my mom, that doesn't make her a real daughter or a real sister.

DIONE: Of course, your mom is not your daughter or your sister.

NATALIE: Marla! I'm talking about Marla! I hate her!

(In the other room, Jelica stands.)

JELICA: *(Shouts.)* I heard that, Natalie!

DIONE: *(To Natalie.)* She heard that? Can she hear through walls?

NATALIE: *(To Jelica.)* You did not!

JELICA: That'll be the lead story for this month's column. *(She writes furiously.)* And you can't deny this story.

(Natalie crosses to the door and yells at Jelica.)

NATALIE: If there's a word of that in your column, you won't have a column—again.

JELICA: Says you. You may not be the editor much longer, Miss Thin Skin.

NATALIE: What are you talking about?

JELICA: You really upset Nathan, you know.

NATALIE: Because he upset me.

JELICA: Well, he went to Mrs. T to complain about you.

MARLA: It's nothing, Natalie. She won't listen to him.

MRS. T: *(From off right.)* Natalie?

MARLA: On the other hand, maybe she will.

NATALIE: *(To Jelica.)* Erase it!

JELICA: Oh, all right. *(She does.)*

DIONE: Quick! Natalie, put something on.

NATALIE: What?

DIONE: Over your...you know.

NATALIE: Oh, right. *(She runs back into her office and looks around frantically. A hand appears from under her desk and reaches upward above the desk. She sees it and screams.)* Yeeei!!!

(When Mrs. T enters SR with Nathan, all the students pretend to be reading or writing. Dione rushes to her seat and does the same.)

MRS. T: Who's that screaming?

NATHAN: That's Natalie. I'd recognize her scream anywhere.

(Brantly peers over Natalie's desk.)

BRANTLY: Sorry. I didn't mean to scare you.

NATALIE: Brantly! What are you doing under my desk?

BRANTLY: I'm hiding.

NATALIE: I know that. But why?

MRS. T: Natalie, are you in here?

BRANTLY: Can't talk now. Bye. *(He ducks out of sight.)*

MRS. T: Natalie?

(Natalie frantically looks for something to wear.)

NATALIE: Uh, coming, Mrs. T.

BRANTLY: *(He peeps at her.)* Natalie. Don't give me away. Please.

(Natalie leans down to talk to him.)

NATALIE: But...

BRANTLY: Pretty please.

NATALIE: I've got to find something to put on over this.

(Mrs. T crosses to the office door as Brantly ducks back under the desk.)

MRS. T: Natalie!

NATALIE: Huh? Oh, Mrs. T.

MRS. T: Why are you stooped over like that?

NATALIE: What? Oh. I lost something. I was looking for it.

MRS. T: What did you lose?

NATHAN: *(To himself.)* You mean, besides her brains?

NATALIE: I don't know.

MRS. T: You lost something, but you don't know what it is?

NATALIE: Maybe that's why I can't find it.

MRS. T: And what is that you're wearing?

(During Nathan's following speech, Mrs. T turns to him while Brantly, still under the desk, raises his hand. He is holding an oversized jacket. Natalie takes the jacket and quickly puts it on.)

NATHAN: I told you she's gone nuts, Mrs. T. She doesn't dress properly, she berates the student reporters in front of everybody else, she refuses to print their stories, and...Mrs. T...she...curses! Yes. I've actually heard her curse in this very room.

MRS. T: Is this true, Natalie? *(She turns back to Natalie who is now wearing the jacket.)* Wait a minute. Weren't you wearing...under-things?

NATALIE: Always, Mrs. T. I always wear under-things under my over-things.

MRS. T: Well, I didn't realize it was so cold in here that you needed a jacket.

NATALIE: Believe me, I need the jacket.

NATHAN: So, Mrs. T, make her rehire me.

MRS. T: Natalie?

NATALIE: He's rehired.

NATHAN: *(Surprised.)* Oh.

MRS. T: Anything else, Nathan?

NATHAN: Well, don't you think I would make a better editor than Natalie?

MRS. T: This whole school newspaper thing was her idea. And it seems to be going well. Unless she abrogates her responsibilities, I don't see any reason to make a change. *(She looks around the big room.)* And look at how studiously everyone is occupied. It's a pleasure to see students working so diligently. Good work, Natalie.

NATALIE: Thank you, Mrs. T.

MRS. T: *(As she crosses right.)* Keep up the good work, everyone.

(Nathan follows her.)

NATHAN: You mean, that's it? You're not going to punish her?

MRS. T: *(Almost sternly.)* Nathan, don't you have schoolwork to do?

NATHAN: Uh, yes, ma'am. And I'm going to get on it. Right now.

MRS. T: See that you do.

(Mrs. T exits. Nathan glares at Natalie.)

NATHAN: This isn't over yet, Natalie!

NATALIE: Uh, Nathan? You're fired.

NATHAN: What? You can't do that. You just told Mrs. T—

NATALIE: That you were rehired, yes. And now you're re-fired. Have a nice day. *(School bell rings.)* Next period, everybody. See you after school.

(Nathan, Dione, Jelica, and Sanna exit SR. Marla crosses to Natalie.)

MARLA: Were you talking about me? With Dione?

NATALIE: Marla, that was a private conversation.

MARLA: Jelica heard it.

NATALIE: Jelica's ears sometimes hear things that never happened.

MARLA: So you're saying you weren't talking about me?

NATALIE: You don't want to be late to your next class.

(Pause.)

MARLA: No. No, I don't. *(As she exits SR.)* Must be nice to have two study periods in a row.

NATALIE: Yeah, I guess. *(She starts to return to her office, but sees Marcus sitting in his chair.)* Marcus, don't you have a class?

MARCUS: Yeah.

NATALIE: Well?

MARCUS: Well, what?

NATALIE: Aren't you going to it?

MARCUS: I can't.

NATALIE: Can't? Why can't you?

MARCUS: I'm stuck to my chair.

NATALIE: What?

MARCUS: I was experimenting with some Super Duper Glue, and I dropped a bit of it on my chair.

NATALIE: So?

MARCUS: Then I sat in it.

NATALIE: Why did you do that?

MARCUS: I wanted to see how super it was.

NATALIE: And?

MARCUS: It's super duper!

NATALIE: So you can't get up?

MARCUS: Nope. Glued myself to the seat.

NATALIE: You have to go to your next class. Didn't Mr. Bluster tell you he would flunk you if you missed another class?

MARCUS: Yeah, he did.

NATALIE: Well?

MARCUS: Okay. You're right. Turn your head.

NATALIE: What?

MARCUS: Turn your head.

(Natalie turns her head away. Marcus slips his shoes off. Then he unzips his pants and backs out of them, climbing up onto the chair and leaving his pants glued to the seat, revealing big loose gaudy boxer shorts. Note: Marcus may need slacks with an extra large waist to accomplish this task.)

NATALIE: *(Still looking the other way.)* Marcus, what are you doing?

MARCUS: If you look, I'll croak.

NATALIE: I'm not looking. I'm just trying to determine how I'm going to phrase this for the next issue of the paper.

MARCUS: Natalie, if you tell anyone what I'm doing, I'll strangle you. And then I'll choke you.

NATALIE: I was kidding, Marcus. Your business is your business.

(Marcus is free and tiptoes barefoot toward the door SR.)

MARCUS: And don't you forget it. *(Exits.)*

NATALIE: Are you gone? *(Pause. Then she turns and crosses to his chair where she sees his slacks still glued to the chair.)* Oh, Marcus, you left your pants behind! You can't go to class without your pants. *(Pause.)* But I guess you did. *(She thinks.)* Brantly. *(She rushes into the office and speaks to her desk.)* Come out, come out, whoever you are and whatever you're doing under there.

(Brantly peeks out.)

BRANTLY: Is it safe?

NATALIE: Safe from what?

BRANTLY: From Susabella. She's after me. *(He stands.)*

NATALIE: Brantly, there's no one here but you and me. And why is Susabella after you?

BRANTLY: I think she wants to kiss me.

NATALIE: And you're running from a kiss?

BRANTLY: Have you ever been kissed by her?

NATALIE: Thankfully not.

BRANTLY: Well, I have. And she's a slurper.

NATALIE: A slurper?

BRANTLY: That's putting it nicely. Actually, she slobbers.

She's a slobbery kisser. She slobbers so much, I have to carry a towel with me on dates – so I can dry off.

NATALIE: That doesn't explain why you were hiding under my desk.

BRANTLY: Because she would never think of looking for me in here.

SUSABELLA: *(From off right yells.)* Brantleeeeeeey!

NATALIE: Oh, no.

BRANTLY: Tell me what to do, Natalie. I don't want her slobbering on my face anymore. I'm running out of towels.

(Susabella enters SR.)

SUSABELLA: There you are, Brantly!

BRANTLY: Natalie. Words of advice?

SUSABELLA: *(Still at SR.)* You're missing second period class, so I came to find you.

BRANTLY: *(He sighs in relief.)* Oh. Is that all?

SUSABELLA: And to give you a great big slobbery kiss. *(She marches toward him with her lips puckered.)*

BRANTLY: Natalie?

NATALIE: Slobber back, Brant. What else can I tell you?

BRANTLY: You mean, when she slobbers on me, I should slobber on her?

NATALIE: Got a better idea?

SUSABELLA: *(To Brantly.)* Come here, baby, and get a big one from your favorite kisser.

(With puckered lips, Susabella reaches for Brantly. He ducks and heads to the door SR. Susabella accidentally grabs Natalie.)

NATALIE: Don't you dare pucker your lips at me.

SUSABELLA: Not you, not you. *(She releases Natalie and heads toward Brantly.)*

BRANTLY: Not now, Susabella. I'm late for class. Gotta go. *(He moves closer to the door. She moves closer to him.)* Gotta run! *(He exits running.)*

SUSABELLA: *(Pleasantly.)* Coming to get you, lover boy.

(Susabella runs out the door. After a very brief pause, Brantly rushes back into the room.)

BRANTLY: My jacket, Natalie. I need my jacket.

(Susabella enters running.)

SUSABELLA: Brantly, why are we coming back here? *(Without waiting for her to respond, Brantly rips the jacket off Natalie, makes a u-turn, and heads back out the SR door. As Susabella reaches the door to Natalie's office she shrieks.)* Yeeeeek! Natalie! You're in your beddy-bye things!

NATALIE: Yeah. I thought I'd sleep all day.

SUSABELLA: I've never seen another girl in her beddy-bye things before.

NATALIE: Well, take a good look.

(Natalie twirls around. Susabella shrieks again and rushes off SR after Brantly.)

SUSABELLA: Yeeeeeek!

(Natalie watches her leave.)

NATALIE: Oooooaaaaay. *(She turns to her desk.)* I've still got some time to work on my article.

(Natalie sits at her desk and starts to write with a pencil. Marla enters SR.)

MARLA: Natalie?

NATALIE: *(To herself.)* Okay. Maybe I don't have time to work on my article. *(To Marla.)* What is it, Marla?

(Marla approaches Natalie.)

MARLA: You said you and Dione were not talking about me, but Jelica told me what you said.

NATALIE: Marla, never believe a gossip columnist.

MARLA: Dione confirmed it.

NATALIE: Oh.

MARLA: Why do you hate me?

NATALIE: I don't think I used the word "hate."

MARLA: You did.

(Pause.)

NATALIE: Okay, I did.

MARLA: Why would you use a word like "hate" to describe me?

NATALIE: Okay, I take it back. How about "dislike" and "detest"? Better?

MARLA: I thought we were getting along so well.

NATALIE: I don't know why we had to move into your house.

MARLA: That wasn't my fault. My dad and your mom made that decision. But our house was bigger. It gave us our own bedrooms.

NATALIE: And who got the biggest room on the second floor?

MARLA: But that's been mine since...since forever.

NATALIE: My room's so small, I have to get dressed in the hallway.

MARLA: No, you don't.

NATALIE: My room's so small, I have to walk on the bed to get to the closet.

MARLA: You lie.

NATALIE: My room's so small...well, I can't think of any more clever things to say.

MARLA: *(She tries to think of a clever saying.)* Uh, your room's so small you, uh, have to open the window to stretch your arms.

NATALIE: Thanks. And yours has big closets, while I have a single miniature-sized closet. And yours has pretty pale yellow walls, while mine are pink. Pink!

MARLA: How can you tell? Your wall is covered with dozens of posters of boys and all kinds of newspaper articles.

NATALIE: That's because I like boys, and I want to be a newspaper person-woman.

MARLA: I know, I know. I just don't understand why you blame me for all of this.

NATALIE: I don't. I also blame your dad.

MARLA: Well, he's your dad, too, now.

NATALIE: No, he's not. I don't have a dad. My dad's gone. All I have is a mom. And he's taken her away from me.

MARLA: I'm sorry you feel that way.

NATALIE: Well, it's what I feel. I can't un-feel what I feel. *(Pause.)* What are you doing here? Aren't you supposed to be in class?

MARLA: Yeah. But some things are more important than classes.

NATALIE: Go to class, Marla. We can't solve anything sitting here gabbing.

MARLA: I thought we might.

NATALIE: Well, we can't.

MARLA: Okay. *(She moves away.)*

NATALIE: And my own mom spends more time with you than she does with me.

MARLA: Natalie, she doesn't.

NATALIE: Yeah, right.

MARLA: Well, my dad spends more time with you than he does with me.

NATALIE: Does not.

MARLA: They're just trying to make us feel more comfortable in our new family.

NATALIE: I don't care. I don't want a new family. I want my old family.

MARLA: Your old family is gone, Natalie. So's mine.

NATALIE: I hate you, Marla. But don't worry about it. Maybe I hate everybody just now. So what?

MARLA: We're sisters now. We should enjoy that.

NATALIE: *(Cynically.)* I may be *your* sister, but you're not mine. *(Pause.)* Or something like that.

MARLA: If that's the way you want it.

NATALIE: That's the way it is.

MARLA: *(Sadly.)* Okay. All right.

(Marla exits SR. Natalie pulls a computer monitor and keyboard or a laptop out from under her desk.)

NATALIE: How am I supposed to concentrate on my article if people won't leave me alone?

(Barn enters SL. He is dressed in ratty clothes and speaks with a slight country accent.)

BARN: *(Loudly.)* Nata-lay!

(Startled, Natalie jumps.)

NATALIE: Barn! Will you stop calling me that!

BARN: But that's yore name, isn't it?

NATALIE: No. I'm not "Nata-lay." I'm "Nata-lee."

BARN: That's what I said, Nata-lay. What'cha doin'?

(He pats her on the top of her head.)

NATALIE: I'm trying to write a story, but I keep getting interrupted.

BARN: Yeah. People can be so rude.

NATALIE: *(Frustrated.)* I'm talking about you, Barn.

BARN: Well, of course, yew are, Nat. Girls are always talkin' 'bout me. And I can understand why. *(He smiles broadly.)* I'm a real charmer.

NATALIE: Barn, I'm writing a piece for the city paper.

BARN: "The No-Doze Rocket"?

NATALIE: Yeah. So let me finish it, okay?

BARN: Sure, Nat. *(Brief pause.)* How long we been goin' together, Nata-lay? A long time, huh?

NATALIE: *(She gasps in exasperation.)* Yeah. Two and a half weeks. And a few hours. Why?

BARN: Well, I've got some real bad news fer yew.

NATALIE: Barn, this is not a good day for bad news. So please don't make it worse by bringing me bad news.

BARN: It won't wait, Nata-lay.

(Natalie throws up her hands and turns to him.)

NATALIE: All right, Barn. What is it? Are you breaking our date for Saturday?

BARN: Uh, not exactly.

NATALIE: You want me to do your English essay for you?

BARN: Well, that would be nice. But that's not the bad news.

NATALIE: It is for me.

BARN: Nope. Nata-lay, I'm really sorry to tell yew this, but I'm breakin' up with yew.

NATALIE: You're what?

BARN: As soon as you finish my essay.

NATALIE: I'm not hearing this.
BARN: Breakin' up. You know – not datin' yew anymore.
NATALIE: (*Seriously.*) Uh, Barn, I realize we're not exactly the perfect match for each other.
BARN: Sure we are. Yew're the brains, and I'm the charm. Perfect match.
NATALIE: Then why are you breaking up with me?
BARN: I got me a new love. Yep. I've really been smitten by her.
NATALIE: (*She raises her fist.*) And you're about to get smitten with this.
BARN: (*Ignoring her.*) You may know her. Name's Marla, I think.
NATALIE: You *think*? (*She screams.*) Marla?! Marla is my sister!
BARN: Really?
NATALIE: Well, sort of.
BARN: Well, good. I'm keepin' it in the family then.
NATALIE: (*Yells.*) Barn, have you gone nuts? You can't date my sister. You're dating me. The rules say you can't date my sister and me at the same time.
BARN: What rules?
NATALIE: My rules.
BARN: Well, your rules don't apply because I won't be datin' both of yew at the same time. I'll be datin' her only.
NATALIE: (*Yells.*) No! No, Barn! That's not allowed. You're my guy. I'm not sharing you with anyone. Especially not my almost-sister. No. I won't allow it. I'll-I'll sue you. I'll-I'll sneak into your house and smash all your toys. Barn, I'll hire me a mobster and have him jump up and down on your head! (*Pause.*) Not that that would hurt you or anything.
BARN: Nata-lay?!
NATALIE: (*Loudly.*) What?!
BARN: Are you upset?
NATALIE: (*In a high, squeaky voice.*) Am I upset? Am I upset? Yes. Yes, Barn. That's what you call it: upset. (*She sits at*

her desk and pounds on it with her fists.) Yes. You could say that I'm upset. Upset and angry. Angry and upset.
BARN: Well, then I'll go, so yew can be upset in private.

[END OF FREEVIEW]