



R. Eugene Jackson

BIG DOG PUBLISHING

Pants on Fire!
2

Copyright © 2012, R. Eugene Jackson

ALL RIGHTS RESERVED

Pants on Fire! is fully protected under the copyright laws of the United States of America, and all of the countries covered by the Universal Copyright Convention and countries with which the United States has bilateral copyright relations including Canada, Mexico, Australia, and all nations of the United Kingdom.

Copying or reproducing all or any part of this book in any manner is strictly forbidden by law. No part of this book may be stored in a retrieval system or transmitted in any form by any means including mechanical, electronic, photocopying, recording, or videotaping without written permission from the publisher.

A royalty is due for every performance of this play whether admission is charged or not. A “performance” is any presentation in which an audience of any size is admitted.

The name of the author must appear on all programs, printing, and advertising for the play. The program must also contain the following notice: “Produced by special arrangement with Big Dog Publishing Company, Sarasota, FL.”

All rights including professional, amateur, radio broadcasting, television, motion picture, recitation, lecturing, public reading, and the rights of translation into foreign languages are strictly reserved by Big Dog Publishing Company, www.BigDogPlays.com, to whom all inquiries should be addressed.

Big Dog Publishing
P.O. Box 1400
TALLEVAST, FL 34270

Pants on Fire!

COMEDY/MYSTERY. The “Beacon of Fire” newspaper is hanging by a thread, the reporters may be out of work soon, and the last editor jumped out the window. The newspaper’s downward spiral began when the publisher hired Larra, a lazy reporter, who thinks no news is good news and is adept at driving away any editor hired. With no work to do, the staff perfects the art of “working at not working” by making paper airplanes, doing their nails, sitting on the edge of their desks looking like they’re deep in thought, taking long lunch breaks, and drinking coffee. To save the newspaper, the publisher pulls out all the stops to find editors, including a former marine, a woman who thinks she’s a queen, a hippie who carries a baseball bat, and a teenage computer genius. But these new editors prove no match for Larra, who gets rid of every one of them handily. However, the tables turn when the publisher names Larra as editor, and she realizes she can’t fire herself!

Performance Time: Approximately 90-120 minutes.

Characters

(6 M, 7 F, 6 flexible)

MRS./MR. B.: Publisher of "The Beacon of Fire," a small newspaper on the verge of bankruptcy; flexible.

LARRA (LAIR-ah): Reporter who hates to work and loves to tell "fib-ules"; female.

OOGIE: Lazy reporter on the national news desk who loves to drink "man coffee" and has refined the art of sitting on the edge of his desk looking like he's deep in thought; male.

JEFF: Entertainment reporter who has a crush on Amy and can't stop staring at her; male.

AMY: Reporter who edits the letters to the editor and has done nothing for so long she has forgotten how to type; wears clothing and boots from the Salvation Army; female.

SASHAY: Reporter who writes the society page and gets her finger caught in her computer keyboard when she types; speaks with a sexy, breathy voice and sashays when she walks; female.

RONDA/RONNY: Reporter in charge of the classified ads and the only employee who does any work; flexible.

MITZI: Mrs. B.'s secretary who is constantly painting her nails at work; has been married five times and all her husbands tend to die mysteriously; female.

FRED/FREDERICA: Editor who gets "sacked"; flexible.

COLIN: Former local news desk editor who jumped out the window; covered in bandages and is in a wheelchair; male.

SYDNEY: Newspaper editor who was fired after Larra accused him of discriminating against her; male.

GLORIA GLORIOSO: Editor with a royal demeanor; dressed like a queen; wears a long dress with a cape encrusted with gaudy jewels, a tiara, and huge rings on her fingers; female.

SERGEANT MILLIGAN/MILLICENT MULLIGAN: Strict Marine who recently retired from the Marine Corps in order to take the job of editor; wears a military uniform; flexible.

Pants on Fire!

5

SISTER SISSY SU SERENITY: Hippy who is hired as the editor; speaks in a serene tone but carries a baseball bat hidden in her loose sleeves or long skirt; has long stringy hair and wears a tie-dyed shirt and skirt and has many beads hanging around her neck; female.

BRAD/BRENDA BRADLEY: Teenage computer programmer hired as the editor; nerdy and independently wealthy; flexible.

MYSTERY MAN/WOMAN: Speaks with a strange accent; wears a long trench coat, dark sunglasses, and a fake beard with an elastic strap; has a hat pulled low over his forehead and a camera hanging around his neck; flexible.

TOMMY: Newspaper's lazy janitor and handyman; male.

MURIEL: Ancient cleaning lady who takes very fast but tiny steps; female.

ZIPPER: Mitzi's fifth husband; has a meat cleaver stuck in his back; male.

NOTE: For flexible roles, change the script accordingly. Character names may be changed to reflect the ethnic makeup of the cast.

Setting

Newsroom of “The Beacon of Fire,” a small newspaper.

Set

Newsroom of “The Beacon of Fire.” There is a large sign across the back that reads, “The Beacon of Fire.” At SL is a small secretary’s desk that sits just upstage of a door that leads into the publisher’s office. At DSR is the main entrance. The USR door leads to the editor’s office. There are five other small desks, or one or more tables at which more than one person works. Ronda and Sashay have computers (real computers unnecessary). The desks or tables may be equipped as desired, with phones, files, pencils, food wrappers, sacks, and drinks. Trashcans are overflowing, and the floor is equally cluttered with trash.

Synopsis of Scenes

ACT I

Scene 1: Newsroom of “The Beacon of Fire,” the present.

Scene 2: Newsroom of “The Beacon of Fire,” a year earlier.

Scene 3: Newsroom of “The Beacon of Fire,” the present.

Intermission

Act II: Newsroom of “The Beacon of Fire,” the present.

Props

Nail polish	Sack lunch with sandwich inside
Coffee cups	Bright ugly shoes or boots for Amy and Jeff, preferably identical (Suggestion: get some old shoes and paint them bright green)
Wads of paper	Whistle
Trash cans	Women's magazine
Brown paper bag	Cup of ice
Desks with papers, files, pencils, telephones, computers (real ones unnecessary), etc.	Pile of powder (for dust)
Radio	Tissues
Files	Rubber gloves
Jacket, for Mrs. B.	Large magnifying glass
Watch, for Mrs. B.	Hat
Paper airplanes	Dark glasses
Big trash bags	Fake beard with elastic band
Napkin	Bound papers or booklet
Several sets of papers	Belt, for Man
Pen	Watch, for Oogie
Letter	Dollar
Pencil	Coins
Pen	Meat cleaver
Child-sized table/chair or desk/chair	Several bandages
Trash on the floor	Wheelchair
Baseball bat	Broom
Deck of cards	
Large salt shaker	
Purse, for Ronda	
Camera	

Pants on Fire!
8

Sound Effects

Loud music

I'm sure you'll I
enjoy it here...
If you work hard
and don't jump out
of any windows.

—Mrs. B.

ACT I Scene 1

(AT RISE: Newsroom of "The Beacon of Fire," a small newspaper, the present. Jeff, Sashay, and Amy are sitting at their desks doing absolutely nothing productive. Ronda is busy typing on her computer. Mitzi is sitting at her empty desk at SL, painting her nails [real polish unnecessary]. Oogie is sitting on the edge of his desk sipping from his ever-present cup of coffee. Standing, Larra tosses a large wad of paper at the trashcan. She misses.)

LARRA: Darn! (Tosses another and misses again.) Double darn.

OOGIE: You'd make a lousy basketball player, Larra.

LARRA: Just as you make a lousy newspaper reporter, Oogie.

OOGIE: Don't call me that.

LARRA: It's your name.

OOGIE: I know. But don't call me that.

AMY: (Taunting him.) Oogie, Oogie, Oogie!

OOGIE: (Trying to ignore her.) I used to be a great reporter.

LARRA: What happened?

OOGIE: I came here. (Pause.) And then you showed up.

(Suddenly, a scuffle is heard offstage DSL. Those onstage turn their attention in that direction.)

SASHAY: (In sexy, breathy voice.) What's that?

LARRA: (Smiles.) Sounds like Fred is takin' a-lickin'.

JEFF: And he'll probably come out that door a-kickin'.

LARRA: Let's hope so.

(Larra crosses her fingers on both hands and holds them up. The others do likewise except for Ronda, who remains busy, and Oogie, who pays no attention to anything.)

MRS. B.: (Off DSL.) That's it! That's the end of that. And the end of you!

Pants on Fire!

11

FRED: (*Off DSL.*) But, but...

MRS. B.: (*Off DSL.*) That's exactly where you're going to get it...in the butt-butt!

LARRA: (*Happily.*) One more editor bites the dust!

(The DSL door swings open. Mrs. B. shoves Fred through the doorway. Mrs. B. is carrying a folded paper sack in one hand and is holding Fred by the back of his collar with the other hand. She gives him a swift kick in the seat of his pants and then releases him.)

FRED: Ow! That hurt!

MRS. B.: Fortunately, it hurt you more than it did me.
(*Louder.*) You're fired! Do you hear me? Fired! Now, get out!

FRED: I'm going. You don't have to yell.

MRS. B.: Oh, but I do have to yell, Fred. You make me have to yell...because you're an idiot, because you're weak, because you're incompetent, because you can't even control your own staff.

SASHAY: (*To no one in particular.*) Is she talking about us?

FRED: (*Indicating staff.*) But, Mrs. B., they conspired against me.

MRS. B.: Nonsense. Do they look like they're conspiring?

(Fred and Mrs. B. look at the Staff. Staff immediately looks busy except for Oogie.)

FRED: Well, not now.

MRS. B.: Leave this office immediately!

FRED: What about my things?

MRS. B.: I'll have Tommy gather them up—

FRED: But—

MRS. B.: And burn them!

FRED: This is so unfair. (*Turns to exit.*)

MRS. B.: Just a minute. There's one more thing.

Pants on Fire!

12

(Fred stops and turns to her.)

FRED: What's that?

MRS. B.: Just this. *(Holds up the paper sack, opens it, and jams it down over Fred's head.)* There!

RONDA: Mrs. B., what...? *(Indicates the bag.)*

MRS. B.: He's sacked! *(Everyone else groans.)* Shut up, and get back to work! Anyone else groans, and he can follow Fred out the door.

(Mrs. B. returns to her office and slams the door behind her. Fred pulls the sack up, revealing his face.)

FRED: Is she gone?

(Larra approaches Fred.)

LARRA: Wait, Fred. Stop.

FRED: Huh?

LARRA: Mrs. B. said you have to wear the sack for five days.

(Larra pulls the sack down over Fred's head. Fred pulls the sack up, revealing his face.)

FRED: Five days?

LARRA: Yes.

(Larra pulls the sack down. Fred pulls the sack up.)

FRED: Over my head?

LARRA: Yes.

(Larra pulls the sack down. Fred pulls the sack up.)

FRED: I didn't hear her say that.

Pants on Fire!

13

LARRA: She said it! *(Forcefully pulls the sack down and holds it there.)*

FRED: Are you sure she said it?

(Fred tries to pull the sack up, but Larra stops him.)

LARRA: Absolutely. And you know how she is.

FRED: *(Nervous, hands shake wildly.)* Yes, I do. Okay. Five days. *(Takes a few blind steps toward SR.)* Just point me in the right direction.

LARRA: Sure. No problem. *(Physically guides him.)* Straight ahead. *(They take a few steps.)* That's not straight ahead. Here. Move this way.

(Larra leads Fred so that he bumps into a desk.)

FRED: Owww! Can't you see where I'm going?

LARRA: Oh, sorry, Fred.

(Larra smiles at the others. Amy gives her a thumbs up. At the door, Fred turns to Larra and slightly lifts the sack.)

FRED: Do you think she'll know if I peek just a little?

LARRA: That woman can see through solid steel, Fred.

FRED: Yeah, yeah. You're right. *(Pulls the sack back down, starts to exit SR, stops, and lifts the bag away from his face. To others, snarls.)* I don't care! You're all dirty, rotten liars. *(To Larra.)* Especially you. You're the one who got me fired!

LARRA: Sacked.

FRED: Sacked. *(To Larra, pointedly.)* You haven't seen the last of me! *(Pulls the bag back down over his face, turns right, and runs into the wall.)* Owww!

LARRA: Get used to it, Fred...at least for the next five days. *(Fred pauses, growls, and exits. To others, victoriously.)* Okay, okay! It worked! He's gone, and we're free...again!

Pants on Fire!

14

JEFF: Free to sit back and put our feet up. (*Puts his feet onto his desk and sighs.*)

AMY: Free to talk on the phone all day. (*Picks up her phone and talks in mime into it.*)

SASHAY: Free to dance. (*Turns on loud music on her radio and stands and sways.*)

LARRA: (*Proudly.*) Thanks to me.

RONDA: Larra, you've got to be the laziest person I've ever seen.

LARRA: You're right, Ronda. And I work very hard at it.

(*Mrs. B. opens her door, enters, and places her hands firmly on her hips. She is now wearing a jacket and has files under her arm. The others turn to her.*)

MRS. B.: Turn that music off!

SASHAY: You don't like music?

MRS. B.: Turn it off! (*Sashay turns off the music.*) I don't like to have my eardrums blown out when I'm trying to think... (*Pause.*) ...and when you're supposed to be working. (*They pretend to work.*) That's better. Now that I've fired the universally detested Fred, I have to replace him. Every newspaper—even "The Beacon of Fire"—needs a good editor. (*Pause.*) Well, at this point, any editor will do. I have a plan. (*Note: When characters address the audience, they step out of the scene by taking a few steps downstage and speaking directly to the audience. Afterward, they step back to their original positions and continue the scene. To audience.*) Laura "The Terror," as I've heard her called, is driving me nuts with her...well, you'll see. She probably won't like my plan. (*Pause.*) Actually, I don't like my plan, but I've tried everything else. Mitzi, I'm going out for some breakfast. If anyone calls, take a message. (*Mitzi is too involved applying nail polish to hear her.*) Mitzi?

MITZI: (*Without looking up.*) What?

MRS. B.: I'm going out for breakfast.

Pants on Fire!

15

MITZI: Okay. Bring me two sausage biscuits and coffee with cream.

MRS. B.: This will be a working breakfast.

MITZI: Okay, skip the cream.

(Mrs. B. seethes.)

MRS. B.: *(To others.)* When I get back, I want to see everybody working diligently...just like this. *(They all simultaneously look up at her.)* Well, not like this. Really working. *(They quickly pretend to work. Goes SR.)* We have a deadline to make. *(Glances at her watch.)* Well, we've already missed the deadline, which was two weeks ago! Most of our advertisers have dropped us, and this paper is hanging by a thread. If we miss another issue, we may all be out of work. Do I make myself clear?

ALL: Yes, Mrs. B.

MRS. B. Good. *(Exits DSR. Immediately, all but Ronda begin to talk loudly. Mrs. B. pokes her head back through the doorway. Instantly, they stop talking and pretend to work.)* This place is a mess. *(To audience.)* But I've heard that "a messy desk means a busy person." If that's true, then it follows that "a messy floor means a busy staff." *(Pause.)* At least, I hope that's what it means.

(Mrs. B. exits and slams the door shut. Everyone sighs. All watch the door.)

LARRA: *(To others, warns.)* Wait for it. Wait for it.

(Mrs. B. enters and thinks she has caught them.)

MRS. B.: Ah-ha! *(They pretend to be busy. Surprised they are working.)* Oh! You're working. That's good. That's unusual, but that's good. *(Exits.)*

LARRA: *(To staff.)* That's it. She's gone.

Pants on Fire!

16

SASHAY: Are you sure?

LARRA: How long have I been working here?

AMY: Working? Never.

LARRA: Well, how long have I been here?

AMY: Long enough.

LARRA: I know Mrs. B. She's gone.

JEFF: She said the paper might close and we might lose our jobs.

LARRA: She's said that before, and we're still here. Don't worry about it.

AMY: Maybe we should write some articles...just in case.

LARRA: No.

AMY: Maybe one article?

LARRA: Amy!

AMY: Sorry.

LARRA: *(To audience, proudly.)* They can thank me for this—all of it. *(Indicates room.)* Isn't it wonderful? A workplace where no one has to sully her hands with work.

JEFF: Hey! There's a Broadway musical coming to town next week. This'll make a great story.

LARRA: *(Shaming him.)* Un-un-un-unh!

JEFF: Oh. Sorry. I'm not going to write about it. I'll just sit here and, uh, twiddle my thumbs. *(Twiddles his thumbs. Pause.)* That's not work, is it? Twiddling my thumbs? I don't think that's work. I once sprained a thumb doing this. Maybe I better do something else. *(Gets an idea.)* I know! I'll make some more paper airplanes. *(Makes paper airplanes.)*

LARRA: *(To audience.)* Ahhh...the peace and quiet.

SASHAY: *(Screams.)* Aeeeeiii!

AMY: What is it, Sashay?

SASHAY: My finger's caught in my computer keyboard!

AMY: Again?

SASHAY: Well, yeah.

AMY: Well, pull it loose, dummy.

(Sashay pulls her finger loose and looks closely at it.)

Pants on Fire!

17

SASHAY: Oh.

AMY: You're supposed to type *on* the keys, not between the keys.

SASHAY: Oh.

LARRA: *(To audience, proudly.)* The newspaper with no news.

OOGIE: I've heard it said that "no news is good news."

LARRA: In that case, we excel at good news. I love it. *(To audience.)* But I hated Fred from the minute he walked into the office. A disciplinarian. I hate disciplinarians. So I immediately planned for his destruction. And now he's out the door. Mission accomplished. Larra does it again. And by what means? By a few well-placed distortions, minor misstatements, a little fib here and there, a bit of logic that makes no sense, and some situational inventions. I'm in control here.

(Ronda steps forward. Larra exits DSR.)

RONDA: *(Angrily, indicating Larra.)* Liar, liar, pants on fire! *(To audience.)* Lies. Everything she says is a lie. She can call them "distortions," "misstatements," "fibs," and "situational inventions" all she wants, but they were outright lies. And they brought poor Fred crashing down. And he's not the first editor to feel her wrath. You doubt me? You don't understand how one reporter gets that kind of power? Okay. Well, pretend you didn't see what just happened. Let's go back to last year when Larra "The Terror" first arrived on the scene. *(Ronda starts back to her desk. Tommy enters DSR with a big trash bag and quickly picks up much of the trash. Muriel enters and crosses the stage. Muriel is an ancient cleaning woman, who takes very fast but tiny baby steps. To audience.)* Oh, right. Before Larra came, this office was so clean, the floor actually sparkled.

TOMMY: Hey, Ronda, I don't have time to sparkle the floor.

RONDA: Just do what you can, Tommy.

Pants on Fire!
18

(Muriel stops and looks at her.)

MURIEL: *(Grunts angrily.)* Hunh!

RONDA: And Muriel.

(Satisfied, Muriel continues to move to SL. Everyone watches them as Tommy continues to pick up trash. Muriel stops at SL. Slowly and in great pain, she stoops over and picks up a single napkin, and holding it between two fingers, begins her long trek back to DSR. Tommy meets her there and shoves her out the door.)

TOMMY: *(To Ronda.)* That's the best we can do.

RONDA: Thanks, Tommy. *(Muriel angrily pokes her head in.)*
And Muriel. *(Muriel nods and exits. To audience.)* I think
we're ready. *(Moves back into the scene.)*

Scene 2

(AT RISE: Newsroom of "The Beacon of Fire," a year earlier. Ronda is typing furiously. Amy is quickly reading several sheets of paper, one after the other. In mime, Jeff is talking on the phone and taking notes. Sashay is slowly typing with one finger. Oogie is sitting on the edge of his desk, sipping coffee. Mitzi is painting her nails. Dressed differently and carrying several papers, Mrs. B. enters DSR followed by Larra.)

MRS. B.: (*Brightly.*) Good morning, everyone!

ALL: (*Brightly.*) Good morning, Mrs. B.!

MRS. B.: This is Laura –

LARRA: (*Correcting.*) LAIR-ah.

MRS. B.: A new member of our newspaper staff.

ALL: (*Brightly.*) Good morning, LAIR-ah!

LARRA: Oh! Such brightness! (*Sarcastically.*) And so early in the morning.

MRS. B.: She comes to us from... (*Reading resume.*) ..."The New York Times," "The London Times," "The Singapore Examiner," and the "Iowa Famers Weekly Gabfest" newspapers. (*To Larra.*) Very impressive.

LARRA: I think so.

RONDA: Why so many papers?

LARRA: Well, I'm in great demand.

RONDA: Then why come here? "The Beacon of Fire" is a small operation.

LARRA: Once in awhile, I like to see how the "little people" live.

AMY: (*Insulted.*) Little people?

LARRA: I received my B.S. from Yale, my master's from Harvard, and my Ph.D. from MIT—all very prestigious schools of journalism.

RONDA: Why did you leave Yale for Harvard?

LARRA: Well, Yale...you know...small time.

RONDA: Yale is small time?

Pants on Fire!
20

LARRA: And so was Harvard. That's why I moved on to MIT.

RONDA: That's the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

LARRA: It is? I mean, well, of course, it is...in California.

RONDA: It's in Massachusetts.

LARRA: (*Without missing a beat.*) In Massachusetts. Right.

RONDA: You said it was in California.

LARRA: Doesn't matter. I earned the super summa cum laude degree.

JEFF: Super summa cum laude. Wow!

LARRA: That means, "Better than the best."

RONDA: I've never heard of it.

LARRA: They created it just for me.

MRS. B.: Laura won the Pulitzer Prize in news fiction a few years back.

AMY: News fiction? I thought news was nonfiction.

LARRA: I have a special approach to news writing.

RONDA: I don't remember seeing your name on the list of award winners.

LARRA: My name is very common. You might have overlooked it.

MRS. B.: And it says here that she has excellent references from her former employers. (*Looks through the papers.*) But I don't see a copy of them.

LARRA: Must have gotten lost. I'll get them to you right away.

MRS. B.: That would be good. (*To others.*) She will be on the news desk.

OOGIE: I thought I was on the news desk.

MRS. B.: You're on the national news desk, Oogie.

OOGIE: Oh, really? I wish I had known. (*Sips coffee.*)

MRS. B.: She will be on the local news desk.

AMY: That's all well and good, Mrs. B., but I don't think we have a local news desk.

MRS. B.: Colin did the local news before.

AMY: No. I mean we don't have a desk. Any desk.

Pants on Fire!

21

MRS. B.: What happened to Colin's desk?

AMY: Don't you remember? He threw it out the window just before he jumped.

MRS. B.: Oh, yes. Terrible situation. Terrible. But he'll make a full recovery...eventually.

JEFF: We may have a desk in storage, Mrs. B.

MRS. B.: Well, good, Jeff. Call Tommy and have him bring it up.

JEFF: Yes, ma'am. (*Dials the phone.*)

MRS. B.: (*To Larra.*) That's Jeff. He's the entertainment reporter.

JEFF: (*Waves to her.*) Yeah. I'm also an entertainer myself. (*Stands and sings loudly and off-key.*) I'm taking singing lessons.

LARRA: I'd hate to be your teacher.

JEFF: (*Insulted.*) What? (*Into phone.*) Oh, hi, Tommy. We need a desk. (*Continues the conversation in mime.*)

MRS. B.: (*To Larra.*) This is Sashay. She writes the Society Page.

SASHAY: (*In a sexy, breathy voice.*) Hi, Larra. I'm Sashay. I write the Society Page. (*Stands.*)

LARRA: So I just heard. (*To Mrs. B.*) Is Sashay her real name?

MRS. B.: No.

LARRA: Then why is she called— (*Sashay delivers some papers to Mitzi, sashaying the entire way.*) Oh.

MRS. B.: (*Indicating Oogie.*) Oogie.

OOGIE: Not my real name.

MRS. B.: (*To Larra.*) His real name.

LARRA: (*To Oogie.*) Sorry about that.

OOGIE: You're sorry? I have to live with it.

LARRA: National news.

OOGIE: That's me.

MRS. B.: Amy edits our "Letters to the Editor" section.

AMY: (*Holds up a letter.*) How about this one. (*Reads.*) "Dear Editor: I like your newspaper, but you use too many big

Pants on Fire!

22

words like 'coroner' and 'epitaph.' What do they mean?" Signed, "English Teacher at Happywood University."

SASHAY: Well, duhhh. Everybody knows a coroner is a cigar and epigraph is a graph with an "epi" on top of it. (*Others look at her.*) Why is everybody looking at me like that? (*Self-consciously returns to her desk.*)

MRS. B.: (*To Larra.*) Ronda Flasheart does our classifieds.

RONDA: (*Pleasantly.*) Anything you want to sell or buy, you can find in our paper.

MRS. B.: She also keeps the staff busy. She's like a Jackie-of-all-trades. I may even have to give her a raise...one of these days.

RONDA: Tomorrow would be nice.

MRS. B.: Maybe next week. (*As Ronda starts to respond, Mrs. B. leads Larra to Mitzi's desk.*) And this is my private secretary, Mitzi Blumenthrill.

MITZI: (*Without looking up from her nail polishing.*) Hey.

LARRA: Hey, yourself.

MRS. B.: Mitzi is very popular.

AMY: (*To Larra.*) Yeah. She's on her second husband.

MITZI: (*Correcting.*) Third.

RONDA: Third? What happened to numbers one and two?

MITZI: They died.

MRS. B.: So sorry.

MITZI: Yeah, they are, too.

LARRA: What happened to them?

MITZI: (*Concentrating on her nails.*) Number one was run over by an enraged elephant. (*Others groan.*) Number two put rat poison on his eggs. (*Pause.*) He thought it was salt...just because it was in the salt shaker. One should never assume that salt is in the salt shaker.

LARRA: So true.

MITZI: He had a vision problem. Afterwards, he had a breathing problem.

MRS. B.: So sad.

MITZI: Number three is a champion swimmer.

Pants on Fire!
23

MRS. B.: Why didn't this news make the paper?

MITZI: Oh, he's in the paper every time he wins a swim meet.

MRS. B.: Not him. The two who died.

RONDA: That must have been after the local news editor –

AMY: Colin.

RONDA: Uh, stopped working here.

JEFF: You mean after he... *(With hands and sound effects, illustrates diving out the window and hitting the pavement below.)*

RONDA: Right.

MRS. B.: *(To Larra.)* So, now you've met everybody. Ronda will show you around.

(Mrs. B. crosses DSL. Ronda follows her.)

RONDA: Mrs. B.?

MRS. B.: Yes, Ronda?

RONDA: *(Quietly to her.)* Are you serious? You're really going to hire her?

MRS. B.: I already have.

RONDA: But she has no references. And her schooling and former employers...they sound so...so suspicious.

MRS. B.: She'll get me the references.

RONDA: But why? Why hire someone like her?

MRS. B.: Because I'm desperate, Ronda. We need a replacement for Colin.

RONDA: If we're lucky, maybe she'll jump out the window like Colin did.

MRS. B.: Ronda! That's not like you.

(Pause.)

RONDA: You're right, Mrs. B. Sorry, I didn't mean that.

MRS. B.: Now, please, show her around.

RONDA: *(Unhappy.)* Happy to.

Pants on Fire!

24

(Ronda crosses to Larra.)

MRS. B.: *(To Larra.)* You're in good hands with Ronda. I'm sure you'll enjoy it here—if you work hard and don't jump out any windows. *(Exits DSL.)*

RONDA: *(To Larra.)* Well, first, we need to get you that desk.

LARRA: *(Sarcastically.)* I'll probably need one.

RONDA: Right. Jeff...the desk?

(Tommy enters DSR.)

TOMMY: Did I hear someone say "desk"? Coming right up. *(Exits DSR but returns immediately with a kindergarten-sized table or toddler's desk and chair.)* It's not much, but it should do. *(Sets it down.)*

LARRA: *(Stares at it.)* That's a desk?

[END OF FREEVIEW]