

WHEN SCIENCE BITES BACK
By Janice Rider
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AUDITION 1-- for 2 w

In this scene, Emily and Susan decide to use bacteria in the science experiment.

(AT RISE: Several days later. EMILY and SUSAN are at the kitchen table.)

SUSAN: "The attempt and not the deed confounds us."

EMILY: No more Shakespeare speak, Sue! This experiment is really beginning to get on my nerves! We've used tap water, glucose, sodium hydroxide, and methylene blue in the amounts it says to here. Maybe our tap water has concentrations of minerals that are causing a problem!

SUSAN: I don't think we're going to do well at the science fair.

EMILY: *(Looks pensive for a moment.)* Not unless we try something different.

SUSAN: What are you contemplating, Emily Parvulus?

EMILY: Dad has some bacteria in the lab. It stains everything blue! We'll just use a small amount.

SUSAN: I thought no one was allowed to enter your dad's lab without him being there to supervise!

EMILY: Sue, I know what I'm doing. You don't grow up as a bacteriologist's daughter without learning a thing or two about labs and bacteria.

SUSAN: I thought there was an entry code that needed to be put in to gain access?

EMILY: Dad's pretty predictable. He codes in numbers that correspond to the bacteria he's studying at any specific time. Neboconnexus starts with the letters n, e, b, o, and c. Dad has assigned numbers one to nine to each letter of the alphabet randomly. The thing is, I know his system of numbering. I know which letter of the alphabet has received what number. Come on!

SUSAN: Emily, this just isn't right! "What's done can't be undone."

EMILY: "To do a great right, do a little wrong." You see, I've learned something of Shakespeare from you. Besides, do you want to fail the school science fair?

SUSAN: No.

EMILY: Well, then, we'd better get some of Dad's bacteria. Bring the beakers with you.

(The GIRLS go to the lab door. Emily punches in the number code. Susan holds two beakers. The two girls enter the lab. They slip over to a wooden apparatus holding test tubes.)

EMILY: *(Cont'd.)* Where are you, Hyacinthocellus? Come to mama! Come on....

(EMILY pulls out first one tube and then another, but places the tubes she has examined into different locations in the test tube rack from those which they originally came from; finally, she finds the one she has been seeking.)

EMILY: *(Cont'd.)* Here you are! Bold, blue, and beautiful!

(SHE removes the stopper and pours a minute amount of the solution into each of the beakers held by SUSAN. Emily then replaces the stopper. SFX: Doorbell. Emily starts, then pauses.)

SUSAN: *(Looks terrified.)* We're going to be caught!

EMILY: Don't panic! Slip back to the kitchen.

(SUSAN returns to the kitchen, places the beakers on the table, and sits down nervously; EMILY puts the test tube back in the rack in a new location and scurries out of the lab to answer the door SR just as SFX: Doorbell again. Emily neglects to close the door to her father's lab in her hurry to reach the door.)

AUDITION 2 -- for 2 m, 2 w, 1 flex

In this scene, Michael reveals himself, the Orchid attacks Ethel, Newton fights Michael, and Gertrude comes to the rescue.

(AT RISE: MICHAEL BATTEN stands in the greenhouse examining ETHEL and ORCHID. Ethel is watering Orchid from a distance with the hose, and Orchid is revelling in the shower. Michael gives a low, important cough. Ethel turns and spots him, shocked.)

ETHEL: You!

MICHAEL: *(Nods slowly, threateningly.)* Bit of a shock, isn't it?

ETHEL: *(Speaks fearfully.)* But...you, you're...dead!

MICHAEL: *(Speaks derisively and sarcastically.)* Do I really look that bad to you?

ETHEL: On the contrary, you look decidedly well...for a dead man.

MICHAEL: I think so, too. Have you missed me?

ETHEL: Of...of course. You have a brilliant mind. We've all missed you, Michael.

MICHAEL: A touching speech coming from you, my dear. This orchid is mine, you know. I've been through enough agonies to deserve it, too. Fortunately, after my ornithological friend assumed that I was dead, people from the Kayapo tribe found me and nursed me back to life.

ETHEL: Michael, I've raised this orchid from a bulb. I've fed it, watered it, fertilized it, and ensured that it had every conceivable advantage.

MICHAEL: Yes, but you cannot negate the fact that I was the one who found it after dragging myself through malarial-ridden jungles for months on end. Doesn't that count for something?

ETHEL: Naturally, yes. It does.

(ORCHID begins to hum. MICHAEL and ETHEL turn and listen.)

MICHAEL: *(Speaks with surprise.)* It sings to you, Ethel.
(Pauses and then continues ironically.) How romantic!

MICHAEL: *(Cont'd.)* Certainly as much romance as a woman like you is ever likely to get.

ETHEL: Michael, please. Don't be unkind.

MICHAEL: That's how we get ahead in life, isn't it? I learned that from you during my time at the university.

ETHEL: I've become fond of the orchid.

MICHAEL: You want to keep nurturing it?

ETHEL: I would be most grateful if you would let me.

MICHAEL: Perhaps that could be arranged.

ETHEL: I would be most obliged, Michael, really I would.
And I will supply you with your very own specimen when it is ready to divide.

MICHAEL: My very own specimen! How generous, Ethel, how very generous! I think I feel a tear welling up in my eye at the thought of my own little specimen. Do you anticipate winning the competition tomorrow?

ETHEL: Competition?

MICHAEL: I hate it when intelligent women play the fool.

(MICHAEL steps toward ETHEL and makes a sudden grab for her. Ethel tries to shy away, but Michael manages to grab an arm and thrust her toward ORCHID. Ethel screams. From SR, NEWTON enters at a run. He continues through to the greenhouse as Orchid latches onto Ethel. Newton launches himself at Michael. The two men begin to fight. Eventually they drop down on the floor, and roll into Orchid, which responds by moving, nodding its face near the combatants. They cease fighting and become very still as Orchid's smell overpowers them. GERTRUDE enters from SR, her nose pinched shut with a clothespin. In her hand, she has a potent herbicide spray, OrchidX.)

GERTRUDE: You are but another weed in my books, Orchid! Prepare to droop! *(Sprays.)*

(ORCHID droops after emitting high violent humming noises. LIGHTS dim.)

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