

I CANNOT TELL A LIE
AT GEORGE WASHINGTON SCHOOL
By Jim Adolf
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AUDITION 1- 2 m, 2 w

In this scene, Paulie and Johna see the truth serum in action.

(AT RISE: PAULIE, ELLIE, JOHNA and ANDREW are at the kitchen table eating breakfast.)

ANDREW: *(Sniffing.)* Hey, Ellie, is there a trash bag that needs to go outside?

ELLIE: I don't think so. Why don't you check the pantry?

ANDREW: *(Gets up and walks around, sniffing.)* I don't see anything. But it sure smells like there's a trash bag around here. You don't smell that? It smells like rotten onions or something. Oh well.

(HE sits back down. JOHNA looks at PAULIE and smiles.)

JOHNA: So, Dad, remember last night when I came into your room, and Mom was asleep?

ANDREW: Sure, I remember. It was only last night, after all.

JOHNA: Well, you were watching some sort of sports show. What was it exactly?

ANDREW: *(Robotic.)* It was the Extreme Fighting Championship, Number 24. Garth "Mountain Man" Tookey against John "The Killer" Miller, live from the Octagon.

ELLIE: *(Shocked.)* What did you say you were watching?

ANDREW: *(Robotic.)* The Extreme Fighting Championship, Number 24. Garth "Mountain Man" Tookey against John "The Killer" Miller, live from the Octagon.

ELLIE: Andrew, you know I don't like you watching that kind of thing. It's so violent. Grown men beating each other to a pulp, and other grown men paying money to watch it and cheering them on. It sends a terrible message.

ANDREW: I know.

ELLIE: Did you just watch it this one time, last night? Or is this a regular thing with you?

ANDREW: *(Robotic.)* I watch it most Wednesday nights at 10 o'clock. That's when the heavyweight fights are on.

ELLIE: That's disgusting. You don't let the kids watch it, do you?

ANDREW: *(Robotic.)* Sometimes Paulie watches with me.

ELLIE: *(To PAULIE.)* You like watching it, too?

PAULIE: *(Robotic.)* Yeah, I like watching it. Dad and I especially like the fights when the guys bleed a lot.

ELLIE: *(To ANDREW.)* I spend all day defending criminals, and now you're turning my own son into one.

ANDREW: Suspects. They're not criminals until they're convicted of a crime. You taught us that.

(ELLIE growls.)

PAULIE: *(Jumping up.)* Boy, it's getting late. I'd better get going to school.

JOHNA: Me too.

(PAULIE and JOHNA run to the side of the stage.)

PAULIE: Nice going.

JOHNA: I guess I didn't expect that to go quite so badly. But you sure ratted out Dad quick, too. About watching those fights with him.

PAULIE: I couldn't help it. Mom asked me a direct question. There was nothing I could do. You could have avoided the whole thing if you hadn't asked Dad about the fighting in the first place.

JOHNA: I'm sure it's no big deal anyway. They'll make up.

(THEY look over at ELLIE and ANDREW, who are snarling at each other.)

PAULIE: Sure. No big deal.

(LIGHTS down.)

AUDITION 2- 4 m, 3 w, 2 flex

In this scene, Principal Van Vleck holds an assembly.

(AT RISE: The auditorium. VAN VLECK stands at the microphone. PAULIE, TIBBY, SETH, ANALISE, MS. GLEASON, MR. LEWIS, STUDENT #4 and STUDENT #5 sit in the seats. There is one empty chair.)

VAN VLECK: Good morning everyone.

(SUPERINTENDENT BECKER enters, notices an assembly is happening, and sits down in a seat.)

VAN VLECK: *(Cont'd.)* The theme of today's assembly, as you all know, is honesty. You've all heard me talk about the history of our town, about my proud Van Vleck ancestors settling it, and about the fair deal that they gave the Native Americans who lived here before them. Well, the time has come for you to learn the truth: the truth about our town, the truth about the Van Vleck family, and the truth about me. *(HE takes a deep breath.)* The truth is, Octavius Van Vleck did not give the Native Americans a fair deal. He swindled them. *(The STUDENTS gasp.)* And he wasn't even my direct ancestor. I am the descendant of his brother, Hector Van Vleck, an even worse swindler who tried to create a religion based on a circle of petrified deer poop. It's a long story, but you get the idea. Like my ancestors, I am a fraud. That's the truth. And although I'll probably be fired before the end of the day *(HE looks directly at SUPERINTENDENT BECKER.)* I don't even care. I feel great. My conscience is clear. It's like a weight has been lifted from my shoulders. In fact, you should all try it. Come up here and tell the truth. You won't believe how good it feels.

(EVERYONE stays seated.)

VAN VLECK: *(Cont'd.)* Come on up here, Ms. Gleason! You must have something you'd like to get off your chest.

(MS. GLEASON reluctantly comes to the microphone.)

VAN VLECK: *(Cont'd.)* So tell us: What secret do you have in your heart that you wish you could say out in the open?

GLEASON: *(Robotic.)* What I've been holding inside all these years is... I love you, Principal Van Vleck. And I don't want you to get fired. I don't know how I'd get up each morning without knowing I'd see you! *(Starts to cry.)*

VAN VLECK: *(Pats HER shoulder.)* There, there, Ms. Gleason. I'm flattered, I really am. And I'm very fond of you as well. All right! Who's next?

(SHE sits back down. MR. LEWIS comes up.)

VAN VLECK: *(Cont'd.)* Excellent! All right then, Mr. Lewis, what is it that you'd like to tell us? What secret has been weighing you down?

LEWIS: *(Robotic.)* Comic books. I read comic books. Every night before I go to bed. My favorite is Spider Man.

(The STUDENTS all start clapping and cheering.)

VAN VLECK: *(Patting HIM on the back.)* That's wonderful! Don't you feel light as air now?

LEWIS: I do. I really do. Also, I wear Spider Man pajamas!

(The STUDENTS clap and cheer again.)

STUDENT #4: *(Jumping up.)* I can't sleep without my blankie!

(The STUDENTS clap and cheer.)

STUDENT #5: *(Jumping up.)* I keep all my toenail clippings in a glass jar next to my bed!

(The STUDENTS clap and roar again.)

BECKER: *(Standing up.)* Enough! *(EVERYONE goes silent.)* That... is... enough! *(HE walks up to the microphone.)*

VAN VLECK: Hello, Superintendent Becker.

BECKER: Van Vleck, this school is a disgrace. Teachers who wear Spider Man pajamas. Students who still need a blankie to sleep. And worst of all, a principal who pretends to be someone he's not and insults the founders of our great town. I will not stand for it. And thank goodness I am in a position to do something about it. Principal Van Vleck, you are dismissed. You have thirty minutes to clean out your desk and be out of the building, or I'll call security. (*VAN VLECK slowly begins to walk away.*) This school disgusts me. I mean, for crying out loud, this entire building smells like rotten onions. What on earth are you serving the children for lunch?

PAULIE: (*Jumping up.*) Wait!

(*VAN VLECK stops. ALL are silent.*)

PAULIE: (*Cont'd.*) Mr. Superintendent, sir, you must have something you want to say that you've never told anyone before. A secret.

BECKER: Don't be ridiculous. Sit down and shut your mouth immediately.

TIBBY: (*To PAULIE.*) Ask him a direct question!

PAULIE: Mr. Becker, what secret do you have in your heart that you wish you could tell us all?

BECKER: (*Robotic.*) Yes, I do have a secret. I do have something I'd like to say.

ANNALISE: Tell us! You can tell us. We won't laugh at you.

BECKER: Okay. (*Clears throat.*) I have a collection. Of dolls. Antique dolls. Antique Barbie dolls, from the 1970s. (*Getting emotional.*) Each with an original outfit. A roller derby Barbie. A disco nights Barbie. An airline stewardess Barbie. A cheerleader Barbie.

VAN VLECK: (*Walks back to BECKER and puts HIS hand on his shoulder.*) It's okay, let it out.

BECKER: My mother never let me have Barbies as a child. She said they were for girls. But I wanted them so badly.

(*TIBBY and PAULIE begin clapping, and OTHERS join in.*)

STUDENT #5: If you wanted Barbies, you should have been allowed to have them!

BECKER: Thank you. Thank you all. (*Wipes HIS own nose on his sleeve.*) You are a wonderful bunch of students. Really wonderful. Van Vleck, you have a wonderful group of students here after all. Whatever you're doing here, it's working. These are some fine, fine students. And this is a fine assembly. Really a wonderful idea. I haven't felt this good in years. You keep up the good work.

VAN VLECK: Does that mean I'm not fired?

BECKER: It sure does. (*The AUDIENCE cheers.*) On one condition, though. You have to promise me that you'll hold an honesty assembly every year. And that you'll invite me back for each one.

VAN VLECK: It's a deal.

(*THEY shake hands. LIGHTS down.*)

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